[For information on the political history of the Malabar coast, as well as on the traditional political and economic system, see category 116.]

631 of Travancore and the Travancore legislative assembly, with headquarters in the capital, Trivandrum. On July 1st, 1949, by order of the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi, the two southern states were integrated as the United States of Travancore and Cochin. The Maharaja of Cochin retired from office, and the Maharaja of Travancore became for the duration of his life the first Rajpramukh of the new united state. The State now has its headquarters and government offices [5] at Trivandrum.

101 Despite these partly accidental political divi-
197 sions, the Malabar Coast is a discrete cultural area. Malayalam, (a Dravidian language strongly influenced in vocabulary by Sanskrit) which became distinguished as a deviant dialect of Tamil about the twelfth century, is the mother-tongue of all but a few immigrant Tamil groups in south Travancore. The area has also had some degree of political unity in the distant
174 past as the ancient kingdom of Kerala. The early history of Kerala is unknown. It was ruled by the Perumals, a succession of kings who seem to have come from outside Kerala and who may have been feudatories in the wider em-
● 175 pire of Chera. Their government came to an end sometime between the fourth and eleventh centuries A.D. After this Kerala was split into many petty kingdoms under indigenous Rajas of Nayar stock, having matrilineal descent. These continually fought each other and, from 1498, with the coming of the Portuguese and later the Dutch, English and French, made various alliances with these powers to gain their

175 individual ends. Their struggles were eclipsed by the Muslim invasions from Mysore which began in 1766, and ended when the East Indian Company took over the area in 1792. But the idea of a United Kerala has not died, and has been repeatedly suggested since India attained [6] Independence in 1947.

161 (3) Population

The Malabar Coast is the most densely populated part of India. The figures for 1931 show a population of 3,533,944 for Malabar; 1,205,016 for Cochin; and 5,095,073 for Travancore. In Malabar the mean density was 610 per square mile; in Cochin, 814; and in Travancore, 668. This includes forest and lagoon areas. The mean density of habitable land in Cochin was 1,400.

[511] Relative to the present exploitation of resources the whole coast is overpopulated. Most of the people lead a hand-to-mouth existence on an income barely sufficient to support life. Want and indebtedness are chronic and there is much unemployment.

Reliable figures are not available for before 1891, but at least since that date and probably for 50 to 100 years previsouly, a great increase has taken place. The figures for 1891 were, for Malabar, 2,557,736; fo Cochin, 722,906; and for Travancore, 2,557,736. This increase in population is part of the baseline from which we must start in analysing kinship systems.

174 631 II The Traditional Political Background

European and Arabic reports on the Nayars

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
Central Kerala Nayar

nearer to the sea (Innes, 1908: 270). The temperature varies from 70° to 90° and humidity is always high. Unlike most of the great kingdoms of India, Kerala had no single great river and no extensive, centrally organized irrigation system. Instead, her cultivated crops and lush vegetation depended on the heavy rainfall and numerous small rivers and streams by means of which small-scale irrigation was easily possible to groups of families.

Further, the heavy rainfall, seasonal floods, and hilly terrain made communications difficult until modern times. Before the partial conquest of Kerala by Mysoreans from the northeast in 1766, there were no roads, wheeled vehicles, or pack animals. The kings maintained small cavalry forces only in the coast towns, traveled in palanquins, and employed runners to carry messages to their vassal chiefs. Goods were dragged downstream by elephants, transported in boats, or carried on the backs of men. Armies moved slowly; local nobles sometimes rebelled against their rulers but warfare was abandoned in the heavy southwest monsoon season from May to September. The difficulty of communications and the lack of a centrally organized irrigation system may have been connected with the fact that Kerala had no regular land tax until the 1730's (*ibid.*: 308). Instead, the revenues of her rulers came from tribute in kind supplied by subordinate nobles, and from taxes levied upon overseas trade (Logan, 1951, II: cxviii; Innes, 1908: 307–308).

In spite of the overseas trade, most of Kerala's villages were traditionally self-sufficient for the basic necessities of life. Quantities of manufactured goods were brought to Kerala's ports from other parts of India for shipment to the Middle East, but indigenous crafts such as weaving, metalwork, pottery, and basketry remained simple and served local needs. Kerala thus had no large urban castes of craftsmen and no indigenous merchant castes, but only immigrant communities of Syrian Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and, later, European merchants and Hindu merchants from other kingdoms of India, all concentrated in the coastal towns. The limited nature of trade and crafts and the comparative self-sufficiency of village life also help to account for the relatively decentralized political structure.

History

Little is known of Kerala until the first century A.D. It then formed part of the kingdom of Chera, whose capital was probably east of the Ghats at Karur on the Kaveri River in the modern Trichinopoly district. Chera, like its companion South Indian kingdoms, Chola and

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

Pandya, appears to have grown powerful on the basis of trade with Rome. Like Chola and Pandya, it was a Tamil kingdom; Malayalam, the modern language of Kerala, did not diverge from Tamil until about the tenth century (Sastri, 1955: 400). It is clear from the Tamil literature of the Sangam period that the basic features of Kerala's division of labor, caste system and village organization, must have developed during or before the Chera period (*ibid.*: 110–140). The three South Indian kingdoms temporarily disintegrated in the late third century, probably as a result of a sharp decline in Roman trade.

There is no mention of any matrilineal caste like the Nayars in the Chera kingdom. When and whence they came is uncertain. The most plausible suggestion is that during the Chera period they were a matrilineal hill tribe occupying the Ghats under chiefs who owed a tenuous allegiance to the Chera kings. They may have descended to the Kerala plains as invading barbarians about the fourth century, when the Chera kingdom collapsed (Ayyar, 1938: 43). Little is known of Kerala between the Chera period and the thirteenth century. All or a part of it passed under the rule of a succession of viceroys (Perumals) from various South Indian kingdoms to the east of the Ghats. The date of the last Perumal is quite uncertain. Many writers concur in placing him in the early ninth century, but he may possibly have lived as late as the thirteenth. Nayar chiefs and Nayar soldiers are first mentioned in three copperplate inscriptions, tentatively dated late seventh, mid-eighth, and early ninth centuries. The inscriptions record grants of land and judicial privileges on the coast to settlements of Jewish and Syrian Christian traders (Logan, 1887, I: 265). The grants were made by rulers of Kerala, presumably Perumals, and were witnessed by Nayar chiefs of Venad, Ernad, Walluvanad, and Palghat. All these districts were famous Nayar chiefdoms in the later periods and persisted until the eighteenth century. The plates suggest that Nayar chiefs with private armies had emerged as vassals of the Perumals at least by the ninth century. By the mid-thirteenth century, at the latest, the greater Nayar chiefs had become independent small kings, and the Perumals had disappeared.

Chinese had resumed trade with Kerala sometime in the Perumal period, and in the thirteenth century this trade greatly expanded under the empire of Kubla Khan. Concomitantly, two coastal Nayar chiefdoms with strategic ports expanded into small kingdoms by conquering the surrounding inland chiefdoms and monopolizing their trade. In the north was the Kolattiri kingdom centered about Mount Eli, and in the south the kingdom of Travancore or Venad, centered

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

175 439 635 about Quilon (Ricci, 1931: 328–330; Logan, 1951, I: 282–283). Chinese trade declined in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but that of Muslim Arabs (who had visited the coast from the eighth century) greatly increased. In the fourteenth century a third Nayar kingdom around Calicut, in the center of the coast, had expanded with the help of Arab merchants (Major, 1857: 13–18). By the time the Portuguese arrived, in 1498, Calicut practically monopolized the Arab trade, and the Zamorin (king) of Calicut held overlordship from Pudupattanam south to Porakkad (Logan, 1951, I: 293–294; Ayyar, 1938: 273, 291). Trickles of trade continued in Kolattunad and Travancore, but the kings there had grown weak by comparison with the Zamorin. Kolattunad had become divided into three virtually independent little kingdoms, and the Travancore ruler had surrendered large powers to the subordinate local chiefs of his realm. Two other small kingdoms remained independent in the interior to the east of Calicut: Walluvanad and Palghat.

175 439 648 The period 1498 to 1792 was one of bitter struggle between European and Middle Eastern powers, who formed shifting alliances with native rulers for control of the pepper trade. By 1600 the Portuguese had practically abolished the Arab trade, but they were themselves driven from the coast by the Dutch in 1663. The English reached Kerala in 1615 and the French in 1725. Each European trading power allied itself with one or another Nayar ruler and took part in successive battles until, in 1766, the northern half of the coast was overrun by Muslim armies from Mysore to the northeast. The Mysorean occupation ended in 1792 with the settlement of the whole area by the English East India Company and the establishment of the British bureaucratic political system (Logan, 1951, I: 404–473).

175 648 635 Shortly before the Mysorean invasions Kerala was divided into nine small kingdoms and a number of border chiefdoms owing only tenuous allegiance to some king. The British after 1792 amalgamated the seven northern kingdoms (Kolattunad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Kadattunad, Calicut, Walluvanad, and Palghat) to form the Malabar District of Madras Province, pensioned their rulers, and brought them under a British district officer responsible to the government of Madras. Cochin, a small kingdom in the center of the coast, remained a native state under its own ruler subject to the advice of a British Resident. So also did the southernmost kingdom of Travancore, whose ruler had already in the 1730's established a standing army, dispossessed his Nayar nobles, and formed a bureaucratic government. Kerala remained divided in this way until after the in-

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

dependence of India in 1947, Cochin and Travancore were amalgamated in 1949 and, under popular pressure for the formation of linguistic states, the whole area was reunited as the State of Kerala in 1956. This state elected a Communist government in 1957.

After 1498 there were certain changes in Kerala's economy. Trade and towns expanded, gunpowder was introduced and wars became more devastating, and cash transactions became more prevalent among the aristocratic castes in villages (K. M. Panikkar, 1929: chap. XIV). But the basic form of the caste system and the pyramidal system of kingdoms, subordinate chiefdoms, and villages persisted with little change until after the Mysorean conquest. The Calicut kingdom gradually declined after 1498, for the Portuguese allied themselves with the small kingdom of Cochin to the south, freed it from Calicut's overlordship, and used it as a base from which to expel the Arabs and subdue the Zamorins. Nevertheless, with fluctuating boundaries Calicut remained the most powerful kingdom until the 1730's.

Although its internal political boundaries have shifted continually, Kerala is today still divisible into three major cultural areas. These are distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the castes who occupy them, in dress, dietetic habits and ritual practices, and in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The northern area, north of the Kora River, comprises the former kingdoms of Nileswaram, Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. This was the area dominated by the Kolattiri kings in the fourteenth century and at various periods thereafter. In British times it became the northern part of Malabar District and the southern part of South Canara District; I shall call it North Kerala. The central area comprises the former kingdoms of Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. It was overrun by the Zamorins of Calicut at various times between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. In British times it formed South Malabar District and Cochin State; I shall refer to it as Central Kerala. All the southern area (until recently, Travancore State) was at one time or another subordinate to the kings of Travancore. The political systems—and consequently the internal caste divisions of the Nayars and the forms of their kinship systems—differed in these three areas. Much confusion has arisen in the past because of failure to distinguish between the three regions. It has been assumed that the Nayars had one kinship system, whereas in fact they had three, with different terminological structures. In this paper I describe Nayar kinship in two kingdoms of Central Kerala: Calicut and Cochin.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

had been so essential to its perpetuation, yet so firmly excluded from its everyday affairs.

Within each Nayar house one room was devoted to the spirits of dead kāranavans. It contained a number of small wooden stools on which spirits were believed to come and sit. The ancestor shrine of the lineage's oldest house contained many stools placed there in turn for the kāranavans of past generations, reaching back to the foundation of the lineage. A newer house would contain only the stools of kāranavans of that house. Offerings of cooked food were made before each stool by the living kāranavan, in the presence of all members, twice a year. The kāranavans' spirits were vindictive rather than protective. They were prone to punish the taravād with sickness or financial loss if any of its members failed in details of ritual performance, in care of the property, or in piety toward matrilineal kin. I have suggested elsewhere (Gough, 1958) that the cult of dead matrilineal forebears served as a focus for aggressive impulses which had their origin in relationships with living matrilineal elders. At the same time it united the living in fear and reverence of the dead and reaffirmed the moral laws of the taravād. It also acted as a sanction against a kāranavan's own exploitation of his juniors, since the maintenance of right relations with junior kinsmen formed part of his pious duty to his forebears.

The Splitting of Property Groups Genealogies and property documents reveal that during the nineteenth century the property groups of retainer Nayars divided at a particular point in their development. This occurred when the property group comprised two or more discrete segments descended from sisters, each segment containing an adult male capable of becoming kāranavan of his branch. For a segment to be "discrete," its founding ancestress, whether herself living or dead, must not have a mother, brothers, or mother's brothers alive. Separation before this point was not possibly because the division of property was stirpital. Individual men, the managers of property, could not separate themselves from their own mothers or sisters. A man could therefore never be a member of a different property group from that of his own mother's mother's brother, mother's brother, or brother. Division could take place only between groups headed by men from different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.), who were no longer held together by submission to a common mother's brother, grandmother, or great-uncle.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

613 592 174 It seems probable that the property groups of retainer Nayars divided somewhat earlier in their development during the nineteenth century than during the period of native rule. The reason for this is that during British rule Nayar men, having no other compulsory work, considered themselves old enough to become kāranavans by the age of thirty to forty, provided their appropriate elders were dead. In the traditional period, presumably, a man would be in arms until at least the age of fifty and would be unlikely to press for kāranavanship before that age.

613 592 161 174 [195] Further differences in the patterns of division of property groups must have arisen from the marked increase in population during British rule. This is not documented until after the 1870's but from genealogies it appears to have begun between four and five generations ago. The increase would mean that more women, and a higher proportion of women, would have had enough living children to become the founders of discrete lineage segments during their lives or shortly after their deaths. Thus property groups in the nineteenth century would divide not only at an earlier point in their structural development but also more frequently than was the case during native rule.

613 592 174 423 The absolute size of traditional property groups was limited by the amount of land available to each. It can be roughly gauged by the size of the houses they left behind. It seems unlikely that a traditional retainer property group would contain more than twenty-five to thirty people, or fewer than six.

Interpersonal Kinship Relationships

121 I describe the relationships between kinsfolk as these have existed in the recent past in the most "traditional" households, making reference to earlier periods when this is possible.

WOMAN-SON

593 The relationship of mother and son was the strongest in the system in the sense of mutual obligation and the expectation of mutual love. A man should place the needs of his mother above those of all other [858] kin. A woman should show equal concern for her children of both sexes, but it was expected that her primary attachment would be to her sons.

[853] [863] [867] A woman's obligations to both daughters and sons in their early childhood included breast feeding to the age of two or three, care, especially in sickness, and instruction in cleanliness and in the manners and morals of their caste.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

If he wished, a girl's ritual bridegroom might later visit her as one of a series of husbands, but he had no prior claims and was not obliged to do so. The woman in turn owed no obligations to him except that at his death, she and all her children by whatever biological fathers must observe fifteen days of ritual pollution for him. Ritual pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin. Until modern times it was not observed by a woman and her children for a visiting husband who was not also the woman's ritual husband. In addition, if they knew him, a woman's children called her ritual husband by the Dravidian word *appan*, the term used for the father in the patrilineal castes. Their mother's visiting husbands they called by the Sanskrit term *acchan;* this word means "leader" or "lord" and was also sometimes applied as a title to village headmen and military leaders.

After the tāli rite and shortly before or after puberty, a woman might enter into a number of sexual relationships with men of her local caste group or of an appropriate higher caste. Similarly, a Nayar might visit a number of wives of his own or an appropriate lower Nayar caste. Among retainer Nayars, by far the majority of unions were between persons of the same caste. A very few favored women had husbands from the lineages of temple servants, village headmen, chiefs, or royalty, or from houses of Nambudiri Brahmans of relatively low rank. A smaller number of Nayar retainers had wives in the lower-ranking castes of Nayar temple menials, but not in the servant castes of Nayar washermen and barbers, which were endogamous.

It is not certain how many husbands a woman might have at one time; various writers [8] of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries mention between three and twelve (Logan, 1951, I: 136–137). Others add that women "never refused themselves" to occasional Brahman or Nayar visitors of appropriate rank. It seems probable that each woman had a small number of husbands from her local caste group who, while their relationship lasted, visited her regularly, but that women also received occasional fleeting visits from itinerant Nayars of appropriate rank, perhaps mainly during military operations.

[8] See, for example, Abdu 'r Razzak (1441), Nicolo di Conti (1444), Hieronimo de Santo Stephano (1563), and Cesar Fredericke (1563), in Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 22, 1857; Duarte Barbosa (1518) and Joao de Barros (early sixteenth century) in Dames, 1921, II: 124, 241; Ludovico di Varthema (1503–1508), tr. J. W. Jones, 1863; 146; Zein-ud-Deen (1579), tr. Rowlandson, 1833: 63; J. H. van Linschoten (1596) in Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 71: 279; Pietro della Valle (1624), Hakluyt Society Publications Vol. 85: 579; Hamilton (1727), ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 310; Buchanan, 1807, II: 411.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

613 592 riage tie. Often, the particular persons who officiated as enangar did not happen to be currently having marital relations with any member of that house. This inter-group relationship of ceremonial obligation fitted the fact that particular marital ties were too transient and slender to carry the normal obligations of affinity.

Prerequisites of the Kinship System of Commoners

595 175 It is not definitely known how the institutions of group marriage and linked lineages arose among Central Kerala Nayars. In 1518 Barbosa, writing of the Nayars of Calicut, stated of group marriage: "And it is said that the kings made this law, in order that the Nayars should not be covetous and should not abandon the king's service" (Dames, 1921: 124). Similarly João de Barros wrote at about the same period: "They say that this (polyandry) is a very ancient law among them, and that it springs from the wish of a certain king to relieve the men of the burden of maintaining sons, and leave them ready for warlike [671] service whensoever the king calls upon them" (*ibid.*: 241). Whether or not group marriage was instituted by a particular royal edict, we know that once it had begun it was enforceable by the laws of the Central kingdoms. Thus, according to at least one authority, a chief could compel a woman to receive as marital partners any of her enangar who wished to visit her [613] (K. Kannan Nair, 1908: 186). The rights and duties of enangar in the administration of caste law were also sanctioned by the chief and, ultimately, by the king.

595 175 184 Considerable literary evidence suggests that a form of group marriage similar to that of Central Kerala existed among Nayars in at least some of the chiefdoms of the kingdom of Travancore in Southern Kerala. K. M. Panikkar, it is true, has argued that Travancore Nayar women were never polyandrous (1918: 270–271). Other Malabari writers, however, responding to Panikkar's statement, have argued convincingly that they were (Aiyappan, 1932*a*, 1932*b*, 1934; Iyer, 1932). K. P. Padmanabha Menon, in particular, supports the view that traditionally Nayar women in both Central and Southern Kerala were "held in common, every woman belonging to all the members of the tribe, and resistance to any of them was severely punished." In support he quotes two early statements concerning the chiefdom of Venmani, with its capital of Kartigapally, in North Travancore. Thus the Portuguese Archbishop Menezes in the mid-sixteenth century reported that "the king of Kartigapally enacted that in his kingdom any Nair was at liberty to be free with any woman of the caste high or low, and that he could kill a woman, with impunity, if she refuses

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

a favor"; and the Dutch Captain Nieuhoff observed in 1664 that "It is commonly reported in these parts, that the kings of Venmani made a law, by which a man was empowered to kill any woman that should refuse him a kindness" (quoted in K. P. P. Menon, 1908: vii–viii). These quotations are especially interesting because they suggest that, in Travancore as in Central Kerala, plural unions on the part of women were not merely permissible but, in theory at least, enforceable by law.

Similarly, Nayar informants of a village near Haripad in Central Travancore told me that they understood that "long ago" Nayars of Travancore had the institution of the visiting husband together with polygyny and non-fraternal polyandry, like Central Kerala Nayars. The same informants reported that during the nineteenth century, after the Nayar armies were disbanded, residence became avunculocal among Nayars in this area of Travancore, non-fraternal polyandry died out, and for a few decades some Nayars practised fraternal polyandry, with a group of brothers assuming collective responsibility for one or more co-resident wives and their young children. Other writers also mention relatively modern cases of fraternal polyandry among Travancore Nayars (Iyer, 1932; Fawcett, 1901: 241). Later in the nineteenth century and during this century, however, Travancore matrilineal property groups began to disintegrate, and fraternal polyandry gave place to monogamy. The Central Travancore sequence of duolocality with group marriage, to avunculocality with fraternal polyandry, to partial neolocality with monogamy, is an interesting one in view of the fact that fraternal polyandry has, as far as I am aware, always been strictly forbidden among both duolocal Nayars of Central Kerala and avunculocal Nayars of North Kerala throughout the historical period. I was able to spend only a fortnight in Travancore and could not pursue the comparison.

The marriage of a woman to more than one man concurrently is not confined to the Nayars in southwest India. The double unilineal Tiyyars and some other higher polluting castes of Central Kerala had fraternal polyandry, and both fraternal and non-fraternal polyandry were customary among the Toda tribe of the Nilgiri hills. The Coorgs to the east of North Kerala are also said to have had fraternal polyandry associated with patrilineal descent groups. The prevalence of various types of polyandry in southwest India generally suggests that *some* form of plural unions for women may have been very ancient among the Nayars, possibly predating their organization into kingdoms.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

613 178 Theoretically, office-bearing lineages were supposed to cohere forever, the officer being the eldest man of the lineage regardless of branch. In fact, if the lineage continued to expand, some other development would occur within a few generations. What its pattern might be depended on the economic and political circumstances of the times. One pattern was for the political office itself to become divided between the segments some time after they had divided their private domain. The head of each segment would then become ruler in his own right over a portion of the original territory, either (in the case of royals) as an independent small king, or (in the case of district chiefs) as a small chief independent of the rest of his lineage but still owing nominal allegiance to the original king of the kingdom as a whole. This type of fission of offices took place in areas and periods in which for some reason trade was declining, customs dues were running low, and neither king nor chiefs could muster enough extra wealth to fight wars which would maintain them in full political control. This 613 178 process went on apace from the fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth both in Kolattunad and in Travancore, the northernmost ● 175 and southernmost kingdoms of Kerala. They had been powerful 648 kingdoms for a period, with the help of Chinese traders, but declined in the fifteenth century after the Chinese trade collapsed and the Arabs built up Calicut. After 1500, different trading powers supported the smaller chiefs of these areas in trade wars against each other, so that these kingdoms remained weak and disunited until the second quarter of the eighteenth century. During this period segments of the royal lineages in both kingdoms carved up much of each kingdom into virtually independent chiefdoms. Within each of these in turn, the lineages of formerly subordinate Nayar chiefs tended also to break into segments, each retaining control over four or five villages. Early in the eighteenth century the British and French each tried to consolidate North Malabar by allying themselves with different local powers, but their struggles were temporarily eclipsed by invasions from Bednur to the north and later, in the 1760's, from Mysore in the east. In Travancore the process of disintegration persisted until the British obtained a trade monopoly and, in the 1730's, helped the king to reconquer his kingdom once and for all and to establish a bureaucratic form of rule (Innes, 1908: 55–75; Pillai, 1940: 266–466; K. M. Panikkar, 1931: chap. V).

613 669 The other course of development was for one branch of a ruling lineage to seize the office and most of the private domains and, temporarily or permanently, exclude or banish the others. This process

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

took place in areas and periods where one trading power was in the ascendant and wished to support a strong ruler with taxes, arms, and shipping, and through him to gain a monopoly of the pepper trade. Such maneuvers went on continually in the Cochin lineage during the period of European trade. In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century the Cochin lineage disintegrated into five property groups. The Zamorins to the north, who were expanding with Arab aid, supported the Mutta ("Elder") branch, installed its head as king, and made him feudatory to Calicut. When the Portuguese arrived in 1500 they took up the cause of the Elaya ("Younger") branch, installed them as kings, and ousted the Elder branch and the Zamorin. By 1656 the Younger branch was dying out, as were the three other branches, and only the Elder branch had members available for adoption. Instead of allowing the king to adopt from the Elder branch as they should by custom have done, the Portuguese forced him to adopt from an unrelated lineage, the Rajas of Bettem, who ruled between Cochin and Calicut and who had just defected to the side of Cochin. The Elder branch then sought the help of the Zamorin and the Dutch, and defeated the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese in the war of 1600. The Dutch ousted the Portuguese from Cochin port and installed the Elder branch as their protégés on the throne. Despite such machinations, the Cochin kingdom never became permanently *divided* between branches of the royal lineage, because the office of kingship, supported by one or another merchant power, retained sufficient funds, equipment, and men to restore control over the whole.

The Zamorin's lineage was unusual in that from at least the thirteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries it apparently did not greatly expand in numbers or divide into separate property groups. Indeed it several times almost died out and in 1705 had to adopt from the Nileswaram lineage, an offshoot of Kolattiri. There were therefore no dynastic wars in Calicut. Even had there been, however, it is safe to say that they would always have culminated in the supremacy of one branch and not in division of the kingdom. This was because throughout the period the Calicut port remained great. With the help of one trading power after another the kingship remained strong and, except for border losses, was able to maintain central judicial control and a system of differentiated political offices within the heart of the kingdom.

Within the Calicut kingdom, which was the strongest until the mid-eighteenth century, dynastic disputes among the district chiefs were usually settled by the king. Succession to district chiefship and to vil-

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWII Kerala AWII
North Kerala Nayar

Nayar: North Kerala

The Nayars of North Kerala live between the Chandragiri and the Kora rivers. This area lay north of the Calicut kingdom and had been conquered by the Kolattiri kings at some period before the fourteenth century (Logan, 1951, I: 283; Innes, 1908: 57). It then disintegrated into the small kingdoms of Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. North Kerala was invaded from the Bednur kingdom of South Canara in the 1730's. It was later occupied by Muslim armies from Mysore between 1766 and 1792, after which it passed under British rule (Logan, 1951, I: 360, 399–473). This account deals with conditions before 1760, so far as these are known, and with the major changes of the nineteenth century.

Ecology

The mountains approach nearer to the sea in North Kerala than in Central Kerala. There are fewer stretches of lowland suitable for wet-rice cultivation, and gardens of fruits, nuts, vegetables, and spices on hillsides are more extensive. Since rice was the main subsistence crop, population density was lower than in Central Kerala. The houses of a village (*dēsam*) were scattered in gardens on hillsides surrounding a wet-rice flat in a valley. Villages were often separated by three to six miles of uncultivated scrub or jungle. Until the Mysoreans built roads after the 1760's, transport and communication by narrow mountain paths were difficult, especially in the heavy monsoons.

North Kerala had four major ports during the period of European trade—Cannanore, Tellicherry, Mahé, and Badagara (Hamilton, ed. 1727: 369–371). Pepper and other spices were exported from inland villages probably from Roman times, but villages were virtually self-sufficient for food until the mid-eighteenth century. After that time the Mysoreans' roads permitted greater import of goods both from the coast and from Mysore, and greater spatial mobility. In the nineteenth century cash-crop farming for export increased, as did imports of

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

439 food and other goods. The population expanded and much formerly
[161] waste land was brought under cultivation as gardens for the produc-
[241] tion of coconuts, pepper, cashew nuts, and cinnamon. Higher in the
[464] mountains Europeans developed estates of tea, coffee, and spices,
[496] which attracted wage labor from villages to the west. The develop-
ment of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and
the entry of railways into Kerala in the 1860's were significant events
in this process.

Political and Economic Systems

564
[566] Traditionally, a hierarchy of the major Hindu castes was present as
in Central Kerala, except that large areas of North Kerala had no
Pulayas or agricultural serfs (*ibid.*, I: 148). Nambudiri Brahmans
were fewer than in Central Kerala, but they controlled a small num-
ber of temple estates and claimed religious superiority over the Nayar
439 rulers. Muslims were the dominant trading population of the ports
563 and inland trading centers.

631 The mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, poor communications,
sparse population, and comparatively low productivity made politi-
cal centralization more difficult than in Central Kerala. The ancient
Kolattiri kingdom was divided into chiefdoms and villages in a man-
ner similar to the later kingdom of the Zamorin, but judicial con-
trol was perhaps never as well centralized as in the Calicut kingdom.
175 From the fourteenth century, when the Zamorins captured most of
635 the Arab trade, the Kolattiri kingship lost some of its former power.
[634] The kingdom disintegrated into three smaller, virtually independent
kingdoms—Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad—plus a number
of small border chiefdoms of uncertain allegiance (*ibid.*, I: 343–344).
174 Each of the three North Kerala kingdoms probably had a population
161 of between 150,000 and 250,000, in contrast to the Calicut kingdom,
635 which seems to have numbered some 600,000 to 720,000 (see note
5, page 473).

175 After 1500 each of the North Kerala rulers sought the help of one
648 or another of the mutually hostile European and Middle Eastern trad-
634 ing powers, thus maintaining a state of fragmentation until the My-
635 sorean conquest. In the struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries some new Nayar chiefs also arose with mushroom rapidity
on the basis of European support and gained partially autonomous
sway over small groups of villages. Political and social mobility among
Nayar aristocrats was thus more marked in North Kerala than in the
more stable central kingdoms. Indeed, a North Kerala proverb re-

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

marks that "When a high-caste Nayar becomes ripe, he turns into a king."

Low productivity and poor communications perhaps made the exaction of tribute more difficult than in Central Kerala, and this fact, plus the uncertain nature of trade, made the local rulers perennially short of funds. This is probably the reason why, although they were trained for warfare in gymnasia in their villages, Nayars were not regularly conscripted into a national army. Instead, they merely fought sporadically on behalf of local chiefs. Further, chiefs and village headmen were insufficiently strong to bring all the land under their control. Their domains were larger than those of Nayar commoners, but most commoner Nayar property groups were independent small landlords in their own right within their villages. Since they were not full-time warriors and since in many areas they had no serfs, Nayar commoners also did part of their own cultivation on their small estates. Part of their land, however, they leased to Tiyyar tenants as in Central Kerala. The polluting castes of village servants had the same rights and spatial distribution as in Central Kerala. In general, the economic processes of reciprocity and redistribution in villages proceeded in a comparable manner.

As independent warrior-cultivators, the Nayar commoners were not divided into separate castes of retainers owing allegiance as vassals and *kānam* tenants to different kinds of lords. Most villages were nominally under Nayar village headmen. In villages of the Kottayam and Kadattunad kingdoms, both the headman's lineage and those of the Nayar commoners belonged to a large caste called Nambiars, who appear to have intermarried throughout the kingdom. Although of the same general caste as commoners, and not forbidden by religious law from intermarrying equally with commoners, Nambiar village headmen's lineages tended, however, to intermarry only with each other or to take wives only from the commoners, occasionally giving their own women in marriage to chiefs or Brahmans. Chiefs claimed a higher caste rank as Samantan Nambiars, and royalty as Kshattriyas. These aristocratic lineages conducted hypergamous marriages with each other and with Nambudiris as in Central Kerela.

Judicial processes were somewhat less centralized than in the Central kingdoms. At least in theory, grave crimes and civil disputes in urban centers seem to have been tried in royal courts, but most civil disputes inland were apparently tried by local chiefs. Under the chiefs, caste assemblies of neighborhoods took care of crimes against religious law as in the Central kingdoms. Murder among Nayars

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

[P. 446]

CULTS OF THE DEAD AMONG THE NĀYARS

By E. Kathleen Gough

IN this paper I shall attempt both a sociological and a psychological analysis of Nāyar cults of the dead. That is to say, I shall try to relate the role-structure and social functions of the cults to those of legal and economic institutions, and to relate the emotional content of the cults to that of certain relationships among the living.

The Nāyars[1] are a high, matrilineal caste of landholders and salaried workers. Some four to seven matrilineal lineages of commoner Nāyars traditionally occupied the high caste area of a village. They served a Nāyar or Nambūdiri Brahman village headman, and had authority over tenants, artisans, and serfs of lower caste. The lineage was exogamous, had a depth of about ten to fifteen generations and was concerned in village government. But the more significant economic unit was a lineage segment (*taravād*), whose members jointly owned property including an ancestral house. The eldest man of this group was its legal guardian (*kāranavan*).

Before British rule began in 1792, the Malabar Coast comprised a number of kingdoms. I am concerned with Nāyars of villages in the former Cochin kingdom, in the center of the coast, and with those of villages in the former Kottayam kingdom in the north.

In Cochin, the country was relatively flat, fertile, and densely populated. The Nāyars were the professional military caste. For a part of each year they tended to be absent from the village in military training or war. Women remained on their ancestral estates under the legal guardianship of the *kāranavan* and were maintained by the work of tenants and serfs. Probably largely as a result of the relatively mobile military occupation of the men, plural marital unions were customary. A woman might have six or eight husbands of her own or a higher subcaste, and a man, any number of Nāyar wives of his own or a lower subcaste. Residence was duolocal: spouses lived separately in their natal homes and a husband visited his wife in her home at night. Exact physiological paternity was, clearly, often unknown, and in any case a man had no rights in nor obligations to his children. Among Nāyars of this area, therefore, contrary to Murdock's generalization,[2] the elementary family was not institutionalized as a legal, economic or residential unit.

In Kottayam, the terrain was mountainous and jungly, the area more sparsely populated, and the kingdom less centralized. The Nāyars were cultivating landowners and only occasional warriors. The hilly and jungly terrain and the sparsity of population made duolocal residence impracticable. In most cases a man took his wife to live in his ancestral household in avunculocal residence, and children were brought up until adolescence in the houses of their fathers. There was some polygyny, but polyandry was forbidden. Fathers had morally though not legally recognized rights in and

to lineage ghosts who were junior to them in age. The living of the *taravād* themselves make offerings to them and do them obeisance, whereas the ghosts of hostile serfs are especially polluting and malevolent and can be propitiated only by persons of their own caste.

Even so, the ghost of such a lower caste person who is honored for heroism by the *taravād* of his masters may, if he died violently, be feared as an alien ghost by other *taravāds*. In Kottayam in the eighteenth century, for example, there lived a certain Nāyar village headman who had as his servant a man of the Tiyyar caste of cultivators. During the invasions of Malabar by the Mysorean Muslim general, Tippu Sultan, in the 1780's, the Nāyar's *taravād* was threatened with conquest and forcible conversion to Islam. Having sent the women and children of his house into hiding, the *kāranavan* prayed before his lineage's patron goddess until the Muslims were at his gates. He then persuaded his Tiyyar servant to kill him, being unwilling to face the disgrace of circumcision at the hands of the Muslims. Having slain his master, the servant hid himself in an outhouse of the *taravād*. In the night he went forth and attacked the Muslims single-handed, killing several of them to avenge his master, before he was himself put to death. The ghost of this servant is now propitiated along with the lineage ghosts of his master's *taravād*. It is also, however, propitiated as an alien ghost by several other *taravāds* in the neighborhood.

Occasionally, malevolent alien ghosts are those of Nāyars who died violently, often in expiation of some crime. They may have committed suicide after being outcaste for contravention of religious laws, or in the case of a woman, may have been killed by their matrilineal kinsmen after cohabiting with low caste men. A woman called Kadangōtt Makkam, also of Kottayam, became a ghost in this way. According to legend, she was suspected by her sister-in-law of having sexual relations with an Oilmonger. Her brothers banished her from the *taravād*. She was agonized at the thought of leaving her children, and drowned them in the *taravād's* well. Her *kāranavan* and brothers were then obliged to stab her to death—the customary penalty for fornication outside the caste, and perhaps, also, for murder within the *taravād*. She became an alien ghost particularly liable to prevent women from bearing children, and is established in the gardens of several local *taravāds*.

Such alien ghosts, although Nāyar, are also propitiated by an officiant of the lower caste. The propitiant is usually from some caste which specializes in exorcism and counter-magic, such as Mannāns (washermen), Kanisans (astrologers, who in any case diagnose the misfortune and advise the propitiation) or Pānans (umbrella-makers, exorcists and agricultural workers). The mode of propitiation is the same as in the case of a low caste ghost.

Finally, an alien ghost is occasionally that of a Brahman who died violently. Brahman ghosts, or Brahmarākṣas, unlike all other ghosts, must be propitiated with vegetarian offerings by a Brahman priest hired for the purpose. But Brahman priests, unlike low caste officiants, never enter a state of voluntary possession by ghosts. Religious possession is particularly a low caste institution. It is not practiced by Brahmans, and when found among Nāyars, it is practiced by young men, women, and other persons who lack secular power. Brahmans do not need to become possessed by their ghosts and deities, for they have the power to demand whatever offerings and fees they require. Low caste propitiants need the authority of a supernatural agent in order to make demands on their high caste masters.

582
*[564] endogamous Attikkurissi clan of the Nâyars, who look upon it as the most fitting union.

MARRIAGE.

58 "The haughty nobles and the vulgar race
Never must join the conjugal embrace."
The Lusiad.

[656] The common assertion that there is no such thing as marriage amongst the Nâyars, so easily accepted in belief that the Government has been persuaded into a commission to examine the question and to pass an edict entitled "The Malabar Marriage Bill" (which happily fell dead, and is extremely unlikely to effect the customs of the Nâyars and others following the Marumakkattâyam law of inheritance), reminds one of the weary disquisition by people who are dull enough to try and prove that Shakespeare's plays were not written by Shakespeare, but by another fellow of the same name. No events of life being so realistic to man as marriage and death (to the individual, to the tribe, to the people) shallowness rather than sturdy hardihood of racial character is perhaps indicated when we find any downright change in the ceremonial of marriage, even though it be but some ephemeral divagation and not properly speaking radical change.

● 175 Buchanan, writing in 1800, tells us that Nâyar girls
585 are married before 10, so that they may not be deflowered
[582] by nature, but the husband never afterwards cohabits with his wife. It would not be decent. He allows her
[837] this and that, and she lives in her mother's house where she may admit a lover of her own or of a higher caste; the lover giving her a small present; never a large one, which would indicate that she was influenced by mercenary motives. He says the young people vie with each
837 other for favour of the other sex, but that, should a Nâyar
175 man have intimacy with a Tîyan (a lower caste) woman,
564 he is put to death and the woman is sold to the Mâppilas! In the case of the *chère amie* being a slave—presumably of the Cheruman or cognate tribes—both are put to death.
[626] If this be true, there were forcible means used in those days for preventing intermixture of the people of the higher and lower castes. Buchanan tells us also that in North Malabar, where as a rule the lady lives in his home, the Nâyar or Nambûtiri lover may put her to death, should she be guilty of infidelity; and he may send her home whenever he pleases.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

635 occasionally adopted this mode of escape from the cha-
527 grin of not being re-elected by their adherents." He goes on to say what Mr. Jonathan Duncan wrote about this festival, of which his account appears in the first volume of the Transactions of the Bombay Literary Society.

635 The festival was held last in 1743.

527 "Those who acknowledged the Zamorin's suzerainty sent
175 flags in token of fealty; and the places where these flags used to be hoisted at festival times are still pointed out. The Valluvanād Raja, who is still represented in the management of the Tirunāvāyi temple by one of the four Brahman *Kārālars*, instead of sending a flag used to send men called *Chāvers* (men who have elected to die) whose office it was to endeavour to cut their way through the Zamorin's guards to his throne in a manner presently to be described. If they had succeeded in killing him—as on the occasion cited by Hamilton, whose statement except as to date, is moreover corroborated by tradition—it is uncertain what would have happened; but probably if a capable Raja had been ruling in Valluvanād at such a time, popular opinion would have endowed him with suzerainty, for the Nâyar militia were very fickle, and flocked to the standard of the man who was fittest to command and who treated them the most considerately.

[127] "With the kind assistance of the present Zamorin, Maharaja Bahadur, the records of his family have been examined and a complete account obtained of the events attending the festival held in 1683 A.D., the festival next preceding that alluded to by Hamilton.

[82] "The festival used to continue for twenty-eight days every twelfth year when the planet Jupiter was in retrograde motion in the sign of *Karkadagam* or Cancer or the Crab, and at the time of the eighth lunar asterism in the month of Makaram the festival used to culminate.

"On the occasion in question the Zamorin some months beforehand sent orders for the preparation of the necessary timber and bamboos for the temporary buildings required at *Tirunāvāyi* and the materials were floated down stream from the Aliparamba Chirakkal lands.

"Then exactly two months before the opening day he sent out a circular to his followers worded as follows:—

'Royal writing to the *Akampati Janam* (body-guards).

'On the 5th Makaram 858 is *Mahāmakha Talpuyam* (time of the eighth lunar asterism in the festival season), and the *Lōkars* (chief people of each locality) are required to attend at Tirunāvāyi as in olden times.

'Mangātt Raman and Tinayancheri are sent to collect and bring you in regular order for the Mahāmakham.'

"The Zamorin timed himself to arrive at Tirunāvāyi on the day after that appointed for the arrival of his followers, and the

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

lucky moment for the setting out on this particular occasion on the last day's stage of the journey was at the rising of the constellation of Aquarius.

"The *Tirunāvāyi* temple stands on the north bank of the Ponnāni river close to the present line of railway. Passengers by train can catch a glimpse of it by looking across the level expanse of paddy-fields which lie south of the sixth telegraph post on the three hundred and eighty-second mile of the railway. There is a modest clump of trees on the river bank hiding the temple, the western gateway of which faces a perfectly straight piece of road a little over half a mile in length stretching from the temple gateway westwards to the elevated ridge hemming in the paddy-fields on the west. This road is but little raised above the level of the paddy flat. Directly facing this straight piece of road as the elevated ridge is reached there are three or perhaps four terraces, the outlines of which may still be traced in the face of the precipitous bank.

"A little to one side of the upper terrace are the ruins of a strongly built powder magazine, and on the flat ground above and on both sides of the fine avenue shading the public road at this place is ample space for the erection of temporary houses.

"In a neighbouring enclosure under cultivation is a disused well of fine proportions and of most solid construction.

"From the upper terrace alluded to a commanding view is obtained facing eastwards of the level rice-plain at foot, of the broad placid river on the right backed by low hills, of higher flat-topped laterite plateaus on the left, their lower slopes bosomed in trees, and, in the far distance, of the great chain of Western Ghâts with the Nilgiris in the extreme left front hardly distinguishable in their proverbial colour from the sky above them. It was on this spot, on a smooth plateau of hard laterite rock, raised some 30 to 40 feet above the plain, that the Zamorin used several times in the course of the festival to take his stand with the sword of Chēramān Perumāl, the last emperor, in his hand.

"The sword is and has been for centuries, slowly rusting away in its scabbard, but it is not alone on it that the Zamorin depends for his safety, for the plain below him is covered with the 30,000 Nâyars of Ernâd, the 10,000 of Polanâd and numberless petty dependent chieftains, each counting his fighting men by the hundred or the thousand or by thousands. Away on the right across the river are the camps of the second prince of the Zamorin's family and of the dependent Punnattūr Raja; the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth princes' camps too are close at hand in the left front behind the temple, and behind the terrace itself is the Zamorin's camp.

"The whole scene is being made gay with flags as an elephant is being formally caparisoned with a chain of solid gold

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

175
635
527

with one hundred and fourteen small links and one clasp, making in all one hundred and fifteen'—as the record specifically testifies—and with golden bosses and other ornaments too numerous to be detailed. But this part of the ceremonies is not to be permitted to pass unchallenged, for it signifies in a formal manner the Zamorin's intention to assume the *rôle* of *Rakshapurashan* or protector of the festivities and of the people there assembled. On the instant, therefore, there is a stir among the crowd assembled near the western gate of the temple directly facing at half a mile distance the Zamorin's standing-place on the upper terrace.

"From this post, running due east in a perfectly straight line to the western gate of the temple, is the straight piece of road already described, but the road itself is clear and the armed crowd on the plain, it is seen, are hemmed in by barrel palisadings running the full length of the road on both sides. Two spears' length apart the palisades are placed, and the armed crowd on either hand, consisting on this occasion of the thirty thousand Ērnād Nāyars, it is seen, are all carrying spears. The spearmen may not enter that narrow lane, and by the mere weight of their bodies present an impossible obstacle to the free passage of the foemen now bent on cutting down the Zamorin in his pride of place.

"Amid much din and firing of guns the *morituri*, the *Chaver* Nāyars, the elect of four Nāyar houses in Valluvanād, step forth from the crowd and receive the last blessings and farewells of their friends and relatives. They have just taken of the last meal they are to eat on earth at the house of the temple representative of their chieftain; they are decked with garlands and smeared with ashes. On this particular occasion it is one of the houses of Putumanna Panikkar who heads the fray. He is joined by seventeen of his friends—Nāyar or Māppilla or other arms-bearing caste men—for all who so wish may fall in with sword and target in support of the men whe have elected to die.

"Armed with swords and targets alone they rush at the spearmen thronging the palisades; they 'winde and turn their Bodies, as if they had no Bones, casting them forward and backward, high and low, even to the Astonishment of the Beholders,' as worthy Master Johnson describes them in a passage already quoted (page 137). But notwithstanding the suppleness of their limbs, notwithstanding their delight and skill and dexterity in their weapons, the result is inevitable and is prosaically recorded in the chronicle thus: 'The number of *Chavers* who came and died early morning the next day after the elephant began to be adorned with gold trappings—being *Putumanna Kantur Menon* and followers—were 18.

"At various times during the ten last days of the festival the same thing is repeated. Whenever the Zamorin takes his

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

175 635 527 [701]

stand on the terrace, assumes the sword and shakes it, men rush forth from the crowd at the west temple gate only to be impaled on the spears of the guardsmen who relieve each other from day to day. The turns for this duty are specifically mentioned in the chronicle thus: 'on the day the golden ornaments are begun to be used the body-guard consists of the thirty thousand; of Ellaya Vakkayil Vellōdi (and his men) the second day, of Netiyiruppu,* Mūttarāti Tirumulpād (and his men) the third day of Ittatūrnād,† Nambiyātiri Tirumulpād (and his men) the fourth day, of Ērnād Mūnāmkūr,‡ Nambiyātiri Tirumulpād (and his men) the fifth day, of Ērnād,§ Elankur Nambiyāttiri Tirumalpād (and his men) the sixth day, and of the ten thousand,‖ the Calicut Talachanna Nāyar and Ērnād Mēnon the seventh day.'

"The chronicle is silent as to the turns for this duty on the eighth, ninth and tenth days. On the eleventh day, before the assembly broke up and after the final assault of the *Chāvers* had been delivered, the *Ernad Elankur Nambiyātiri Tirumalpad* (the Zamorin next in succession) and the *Tirumanisseri Nambūtiri* were conveyed in palanquins to the eastern end of the narrow palisaded lane, and thence they advanced on foot, prostrating themselves four times towards the Zamorin, once at the eastern end of the lane, twice in the middle, and once at the foot of the terraces. And after due permission was obtained they took their places on the Zamorin's right hand.

"After this, so the chronicle runs, it was the duty of the men who have formed the body guard to march up with music and pomp to make obeisance. On this occasion, however, a large portion of the body-guard seems to have been displeased, for they left without fulfilling this duty, and this story corroborates in a marked way the facts already set forth (page 132) regarding the independence and important political influence possessed by the Nāyars as a body.

"The *Ērnād Menon* and the *Calicut Talachanna Nāyar* with their followers were the only chiefs who made obeisance in due form to the Zamorin on this occasion, and possibly by the time of the next festival (1695 A.D.), of which Hamilton wrote, the dissatisfaction might have increased among his followers and the Zamorin's life even may have been endangered

---

* The fifth Prince of the Zamorin's family.
† The fourth Prince of the Zamorin's family.
‡ The third Prince of the Zamorin's family.
§ The second Prince and heir apparent of the Zamorin's family.
‖ The ten thousand of Pōlanād, the district round about Calicut, formed the Zamorin's own immediate body-guard—Conf. the account contained in the *Kēralolpatti* of how these men were originally selected ~ Chapter III, section (*a*).

as Hamilton alleges, probably through lack of men to guard him. Tradition asserts that the *Chāver* who managed on one occasion to get through the guards and up to the Zamorin's seat belonged to the family of the Chāndrattil Panikkar.

"The chronicle winds up with a list of the *Chāvers* slain on this occasion, viz.:—

When the Zamorin was taking his stand on the terrace apparently at the commencement of festivities	5
On the day the elephant was adorned as already stated	18
"The next day of *Chandrattil Panikkar* and followers, the number who came and died	11
'Of *Verkōt Panikkar* and followers the number that came and died the third day.	12
'The number who came to Vakkayūr and died in the four days	4
'The number of *Chāvers* who were arrested at the place where Kalattal Itti Karunākara Menon was, and brought tied to Vakkayūr and put to death	1
'The number of *Chāvers* arrested on the day of the sacrifice, when all the men together made the obeisance below Vakkayūr at the time when the Zamorin was taking his stand, and left tied to the bars, and who were afterwards brought to Vakkayūr and after the ceremony was over and the Zamorin had returned to the palace were put to the sword	4
Total ...	55

"The chronicle does not mention the fact, but a current tradition states that the corpses of the slain were customarily kicked by elephants as far as the brink of the fine well, of which mention has been made, and into which they were tumbled promiscuously. The well itself is nearly filled up with dêbris of sorts, and a search made at the spot would probably elicit conclusive evidence of the truth of this tradition.

"The martial spirit of the Nāyars was in former days kept alive by such desperate enterprises as the above, but in every-day-life the Nāyar used to be prepared and ready to take vengeance on any who affronted him, for he invariably carried weapons, and when a man was slain it was incumbent on his

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

In the south-east of Malabar, in the neighbourhood of Palghat, the Ônam games are of a rougher character, the tenants of certain jenmis (landlords) turning out each under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights in which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen a kind of boxing which would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power. We may safely assume that the "3,000 lbs. of pepper" which Alarie demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar.*

Before ending this very incomplete account of customs of the Nâyars, mention must be made of two more of these, both odd. Ever since Châraman Perumal departed from the west coast of India in A.D. 825, setting sail for Arabia and Mecca, having divided up his kingdom, His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore when ascending his throne says: "I ascend the musnud, and will rule until my uncle returns." The "uncle" is Châraman Perumal, the last sovereign of the west coast, who, having embraced the Muhammadan religion which was brought to his shores by Arab traders, proceeded to carry out a wild idea—so goes the legend—of receiving instruction from the Prophet himself! He never returned. To one princeling was given the territory now known as Travancore, and his surviving successor (through the female line of course) is the present Maharajah of Travancore. To another he gave Cochin, the ruler of which State also inherits through the female line. To the ancestor of the Zamorin of Calicut the Perumal gave no territory, as to the others, but he gave him his sword (it is still in existence) with the advice "to die and kill and annex." That he annexed is quite clear, as he was the sovereign not only of Calicut but of the country round about when modern Europeans first visited the west coast of India. Like the Maharajah of Travancore, the Zamorin repeats the formula that he rules until his uncle returns, but in his case it forms part of an elaborate and costly ceremony. The fort, which was the official residence of the Zamorin,

* See Madras Government Museum Catalogue No. 2, Roman Coins, by Mr. Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Museum.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar

[P.45]

Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast

Curl Bequest Prize Essay, 1953[*]

E. KATHLEEN GOUGH

INTRODUCTION

588
564
121
611
591
121
588
[175]
[127]
[114]

UNTIL TWENTY YEARS AGO, the *tāliketṭukalyāṇam* (*tāli*-tying marriage) was performed by almost all the castes of Malabar below Brahmans and above the lowest 'exterior' castes.[1] I confine this discussion to four groups with different kinship systems: the matrilineal, uxorilocal Nayars of South Malabar District and Cochin; the matrilineal, virilocal Nayars of North Malabar District; the matrilineal, virilocal Tiyyars of North Malabar District; and the double unilineal, patrilocal Tiyyars of South Malabar and Cochin.[2]

This girls' initiation ceremony was apparently first described in 1510 by Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese traveller. Since that date, there have been descriptions of the ceremony by other Portuguese, Dutch, and East India Company writers, and in the past sixty years much controversy between Indian and British anthropologists about its origin and meaning. Yet no one, as far as I know, has recognized its significance in terms of the total kinship systems of the castes who performed it.[3] My first task has therefore been to describe the *tāli*-rite in each caste and to discuss its social function in the kinship system; I do so in Parts I to IV of the essay. In these, I have used the reports of previous writers which, since the rite died out about twenty years ago, are in many cases better than those I collected from informants. At the same time, for a full interpretation of the rite, I found it necessary to incorporate some of my own general field data on Nayar and Tiyyar kinship, collected in 1947-9. My field work was carried out in a South Malabar village (Walluvanād subdivision) for six months, in a Cochin village for eight months, and in a North Malabar village (Kottayam subdivision) for eight months.[4]

Having analyzed, as far as I was able, the social function of the ceremony, I found that, as perhaps with all rites, many of its features were not explicable in terms of social function and of conscious motivations. While it was possible to show, in a general way, how in each case the ceremony was in harmony with the pattern of kinship relations in these groups, it was not possible to explain sociologically why certain persons should take part in the rites, rather than other persons, why certain material objects should be used, and indeed, why it should be necessary to perform this ceremony at all. It seemed to me that the answer to these problems lay in unconscious motivations common to the members of these castes, and could

[*][Two Curl Bequest Prizes were awarded for the year 1953, one to the writer of the present essay and the other to Mr H. N. C. Stevenson, O.B.E., for his essay 'Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System', which appeared in the last volume of the JOURNAL. – ED.]

[1] For a brief analysis of modern changes in Nayar kinship see Gough (1952). For a fuller analysis of modern changes in the Tiyyar systems see Aiyappan (1944).

[2] The Tiyyars are called Iravas or Chovans in some parts of South Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. For convenience, I use 'Tiyyars' throughout.

[3] Dr Aiyappan (1942; 1944, pp. 159-62) has made the most comprehensive study of Malabar *tāli*-rites. He concludes that in most of the castes the *tāli*-rite is 'nothing more than an initiatory rite, preliminary to attaining marriageable status'. While I agree with him, I think that this conclusion begs the question and does not explain the function or motivations of the rite.

[4] My field work was made possible by the grant of a William Wyse Studentship from Trinity College, Cambridge, and of an Anthony Wilkin Studentship from the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

[101]
[114]
[122]

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

be elucidated only in terms of a psycho-analytic hypothesis. Part V of the essay is therefore an attempt to try out a psycho-analytic approach to Hindu ritual, and to show, with reference to one ceremony, that this approach permits a deeper analysis than is possible if we limit ourselves to a discussion of social function.

The use by anthropologists of psycho-analytic findings to interpret primitive myth and ritual is familiar from modern American writings; it has scarcely been accepted by British anthropologists. I admit that, for anthropologists, psycho-analytic theories must in the long run depend for their authority on analyses of a significant number of individuals in the society whose symbolism it is hoped to interpret. Such data are not, however, at present forthcoming, and in many Indian groups it is doubtful if they will be forthcoming before the myths and rites have died out. In the meantime, as I hope to show, the results of psycho-analytic work in the West can give us insights into the probable unconscious motives behind primitive religious practices, and allow us to formulate new if tentative hypotheses on the connexions between the kinship structure of a group and its religious symbolism.

This essay therefore, while confined to the analysis of one ceremony, fulfils the terms of the Curl Bequest Competition, since it incorporates in a single theory field data recently collected on four Malabar kinship systems; uses the material of other anthropologists (see Aiyappan 1942, 1944; Dube 1953) who have worked on Indian initiation rites in the past ten years, to advance a sociological interpretation of these rites; and tests, with reference to these rites, certain hypotheses of the British school of psycho-analysts put forward in recent years.[1]

Part I. The Nayar *Tāli*-Rite in South Malabar and Cochin

This area is in the centre of the Malabar Coast, south of the Kora River and north of the Travancore–Cochin boundary. Before 1792, it comprised the mutually hostile kingdoms of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Walluvanād, and the Maharaja of Cochin. The area was temporarily conquered by the Zamorins in the late 15th century and Cochin and Walluvanād were made feudatory kingdoms. Probably for this reason, the Nayar sub-castes of Walluvanād and Cochin correspond closely to those of Calicut, since they owed their existence to a political system common to these three kingdoms. By contrast, the kingdoms to the north and south, where the Zamorins failed to penetrate, had different political systems and correspondingly different hierarchies of Nayar sub-castes. Today, the Nayars of South Malabar and Cochin still show greater cultural similarity, feel greater unity, and intermarry more freely than they do with Nayars to the north or to the south.

At the head of each of the central kingdoms was a royal matrilineage. Being at enmity, the royal lineages disputed for rank, would not intermarry, and, though exogamous, formed each a separate caste. Each however acknowledged itself inferior to the Nambûdiri Brahmans (landlords and priests) whose separate caste-organization extended throughout the Malabar Coast, and who were above and outside the laws of the separate kingdoms.

Below the royal lineages came the Sāmantans, chiefs (*nāduvaris*) of districts (*nādu*). These owed allegiance to the Raja and had administrative control over the next sub-caste, of Kiriyattil Nayars (called Vellayma Nayars in Cochin), the headmen (*desavaris*) of villages (*desams*). Below the Kiriyattils came three parallel sub-castes: Sûdra Nayars, Charna Nayars (respectively called Illath Sûdras and Swaroopattil Sûdras in Cochin), and Pallichans. Sûdra Nayars were hereditary tenants and retainers in villages where the land was owned by a patrilineal family of Nambûdiri Brahmans. Charna Nayars were retainers in villages owned by *nāduvari* or *desavari* lineages. Pallichans owed similar allegiance in villages owned by a branch of the

[1] For the psycho-analytic interpretation of this essay I am chiefly indebted to Freud (1913, 1918, 1919), Ernest Jones (1911, 1951), Melanie Klein (1932), and Roheim (1950).

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

175 564 613 631 [90] [566] 613 [601] [783] [91] [69] [592] [591] [595] [178]

royal lineage. The retainer sub-castes disputed for rank and, in their separate villages, held the same rights of administration over the lower castes. In all these sub-castes, including the royal lineage, men were trained from the age of seven as soldiers in village gymnasia headed by military leaders (Asāns), and formed a permanent, mobile militia of the kingdom. Below the retainer sub-castes in rank came the small, non-military Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers.[1] Quite apart from these Brahman and Nayar sub-castes, in a separate area of the village lived the lower patrilineal castes of tenants and menials and the lowest, 'exterior' castes of serfs.

The Nayar Kinship System. The Nayar lineage (*taravāḍ*) is exogamous and matrilineal kinship terms are extended throughout its range. Its members are united by the observance of fifteen days' ritual pollution at a birth or death, and traditionally by worship of the spirits of dead heads of the lineage, and of a group of totemic snakes. The lineage is divided into small segments, which I call property-groups, each three to five generations deep. Each group is headed by its eldest man (*kāraṇavan*) who is the legal guardian of its members and controls their property.

The property-group was also until recently the dwelling-group. Residence was, and is still in some houses, uxorilocal: a husband visits his wife after supper and leaves before breakfast. Traditionally, a woman might have any number of lovers of appropriate sub-caste, and a man any number of mistresses. This custom of combined polyandrous and polygynous unions, besides being consistent with a strong matrilineal lineage system, was almost certainly associated with the occupation of Nayar men as soldiers, since it began to die out shortly after the armies were disbanded, about 1810, and a hundred years before the lineage showed signs of disintegration.

613 582 564

The rules of mating were as follows. Sex relations were prohibited within the lineage, and with more than one man or one woman of the same lineage. The Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers were endogamous, as were all the lower patrilineal castes and the serf-castes. Within the range of military and ruling sub-castes (except for the royal lineages which admitted no peers), all unions were permissible outside the lineage and the range of prohibited affines, and within the sub-caste. Furthermore, these sub-castes were knit together by 'hypergamous' unions between women of lower and men of higher sub-caste. Members of the three retainer sub-castes, which disputed for rank, had only temporary and sporadic sex-relations across sub-caste boundaries. These took place during war when soldiers were permitted to contravene the normal rules against dining with or touching members of other retainer sub-castes and might enter each others' houses in order to eat and sleep. More permanent relationships were encouraged between women of the retainer sub-castes and Kiriyattil, Sāmantan, royal, or Nambūdiri men; between Kiriyattil women and Sāmantan, royal, or Nambūdiri men; between Sāmantan women and royal or Nambūdiri men; and between royal women and Nambūdiri men. The royal lineages, acknowledging no others as peers, were obliged to marry all their women upwards and all their men downwards. The Walluvanād and Cochin princesses married Nambūdiri men, the princes Sāmantan, Kiriyattil, or retainer-women. The Zamorins at first married only some of their women to Nambūdiris, and the rest to men of the more ancient royal lineages of Beypore, Bettem, and Kodungalur, all of whom had been conquered by the Zamorins and made honoured vassals in their kingdom. At some time in the 18th century, the Zamorin's lineage gave up this practice and began to marry its women only to Nambūdiris, while continuing to marry its men to Sāmantan, Kiriyattil, and retainer-Nayar women.

[1] Respectively called Vettukads, Attikurisis (Chidigans in Cochin), Velutheḍans, and Vilakkatalavans. The small temple-servant castes who rank between Nambūdiris and Nayars and were also concerned in hypergamous marriages are for lack of space excluded from this discussion.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar

collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambûdiris and rulers on the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambûdiri *genitors*, and boast that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

Part II. The Nayar *Tali*-Rite in North Malabar

North Malabar lies north of the Kora River, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri, Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges, usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys. This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was never consolidated as was the Zomorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nâduvaris* fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within the *nâd*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*, appointed by the Raja or the *nâduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south. *Nâduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived, employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves Samantan Nambiars. Nambûdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especially since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore. Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

The Nayar Kinship System. North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage his *tavazhi* property under the direction of his *kâranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kâranavan* and her father, often to the *kâranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the Mamalukes of Egypt.[1] Camoens, the Milton of Portugal, described them in these lines :—

> "By the proud Nāyars noble rank is claimed ;
> The toils of culture and of art they scorn,
> The shining falchion brandished in the right,
> Their left arm wields the target in the fight."

As a matter of fact, the Nāyars as a military aristocracy have been famous ever since Marco Polo travelled in Asia.

"In this region of Malabar," says Gaspar Correa, writing on the three voyages of da Gama,[2] "the race of Gentlemen is called Nairs who are people of war. They are people who are very refined in blood and customs and separated from all other people. So much do they value themselves that no one of them ever turned a Moor."

"Of these Malabars there are two manner of people (the one is) Noblemen called Nāyars which are soldiers and do only weare and handle arms and the other is the common people called Polayas. The Nayros must [in all places] where they go or stand weare such arms as are appointed for them and alwaies be ready at the King's commandement. . . . . .

"As these Nayros go in the streets they cry po ! po ! which is to say take heed I come, stand out of the way."[3]

Historical circumstances have also had their share in the abundance of material which foreigners have left with regard to the Nāyars. Malabar was the seat of Arabic trade, and the Portuguese first landed at Calicut. During the hundred and fifty years of Portuguese power in India they had dealings mostly with the Zamorin of Calicut, the Rajah of Cochin, and the Deva Narayana, Rajah of Prakaud. That was the land from which spices came, and the Portuguese, therefore, were interested in the petty politics of these principalities. The Dutch, who followed them, also had their main interest on the mainland of India centred on Cochin, and in the first beginnings of English commerce, also, Malabar had a share. Apart from these a number of observant travellers has visited the seaboard of Malabar.

But though material of a kind is, therefore, abundant, it is found on closer examination to be unscientific and unreliable. The Nāyar Society of the eighteenth century, or an age previous to that, cannot be reconstructed from the observations of either Duarte Barbosa or Vinschar. An accurate and scientific description of the state of society prevalent before European contact is possible only after a thorough and searching study of Nāyar literature. Camoens' description of the Nāyars as scorning the toils of culture is not true. Malayalam has an extensive

[1] Had they (the French aristocracy) been like the Mamalukes of Egypt or Nāyars of the coast of Malabar. (*French Revolution*, p. 148, World's Classics.)

[2] *Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, Hakluyt Soc., vol. i, p. 185.

[3] *Voyage of Linschoten to the East Indies*, translation of 1598. Edited by Hakluyt Soc., vol. i, p. 278 *et seq.*

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

595 175 [609] [114] the last fifty years. All the evidence that we have of this custom among the Nāyars in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, are from foreign travellers who, it must be remembered, were not allowed to come within sixty yards of a Nāyar house. Their evidence, therefore, is an extremely unsatisfactory ground for dogmatising on Nāyar customs. On the other hand, the extensive Malayalam literature of that 595 174 538 period contains no single allusion to polyandry. The works of Kunchan Nambiar, whom it is no exaggeration whatever to compare to Molière, though he describes minutely the social life of the Nāyars of the early eighteenth century with its laxity of morals, redeemed only by chivalry of conduct, makes no mention whatever of polyandry. On the other hand, in a famous passage he makes the declaration: "It is against the laws of all castes for a woman to have four or five husbands."

Nalanchu barthavoru thikku thanatu
Nalu jatikkum Viddhichatallorkanam.

595 174 How far this statement is decisive it is difficult to say. But one thing seems to be clear from it, that the idea in itself was repugnant to the community as a whole, though individuals might have practised it here and there.[1]

V.—BIRTH AND FUNERAL CEREMONIES.

844 Among the Nāyars, as among all the people whose life is regulated by magico-religious customs, child-birth is an event of great and mysterious significance. Especially is this the case with regard to the first child. Therefore the ceremonies of nativity are of an intenser and more magical character during the time of the first pregnancy than during subsequent ones. Indeed, the mysterious nature of childbearing is entirely lost after the first time, and the ceremonies on subsequent occasions are only a few tabus, which are generally, in the phraseology of Van Genepp, "rites dynamistes directs et negatives."

843 613 The most important of the pre-natal ceremonies is *Pulicudi*,[2] or the drinking of the tamarind juice; and the customs relating it are as follows: On the appointed day all the *enangars* (people belonging to the same kingship organization) come to the house early in the morning, and the pregnant woman is taken out by one of them and bathed, after rubbing oil all over her. Then she is dressed for the occasion and, entering the house from the north, sits looking eastward. The astrologer, [564] [987] who being of a lower caste commonly stands in the outer courtyard, calculates the auspicious hour. He sends word when the time is come, and the *Ammāci* (the [604] wife of the mother's brother, and mother-in-law by right of the brother) pours a few [593] drops of tamarind juice in a small silver bowl. The brother or the uncle of the

[1] See Note 3, Appendix.

[114] [2] Dr. Rivers makes some obviously erroneous deductions based upon this word, for which see note on "The Similarities between Nāyars and the Todas," Appendix, Note 2.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

174 not borne out either by any Sanskrit authority or Dravidian traditions;[1] but certain legends refer to conflicts between them and the Hindu colonists of later times, and these are said to have been led by Parasurama, and the Nagas from Pätäla whom they found in possession of the country.[2] The latter were not forced to divide the spoil with the Kshatriyas or warriors who elsewhere counterbalanced the power of the Brahmans, and obliged them to keep up a continual struggle in which victory alternated with defeat. These internecine dissensions gave the indigenous element a chance to recover itself by degrees, and finally gave birth to a military aristocracy called the Nayars.[3]

701 The Nayars of ancient times formed the chief militia in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, and their valour and other fighting qualities evoked the admiration of foreigners, and inspired even the restless Portuguese poet Cameons, who described them in the following apt lines:—

The military character of the Nayars.

> Poliar the labouring clans were named;
> By the proud Nayars the noble rank is claimed;
> The toils of culture and of art they scorn:
> The shining faulqhion brandished in the right;
> Their left aram wields the target in the fight.

175 One of the earliest accounts of the Nayars is found in the 701 writings of Duarte Barbosa, who described them as men of noble descent, who had to be armed as knights by the king or lord with whom they lived, and who could not call themselves Nayars until they had been so equipped as to bear arms. They were generally sent to school at the age of seven to learn all [868] manner of athletic feats and to enable them to use their [147] weapons.[4] Their sinews and joints were so stretched and anointed with the *oyle sesamus* by skillful fellows called "Panicars," who were captains in war, that they became very light and nimble; and could "wind and twine their bodies" as if they had no bones. They cast themselves backwards and forwards, high and low, to the astonishment of the beholders, and the delight in their weapon was so great that they

1. Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, Introduction, page 107.
2. The Sun and the Serpent, page 107.
3. Primitive Folk, page 107.
4. A description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar by Duarte Barbosa, page 128—129.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

persuaded themselves, that no nation could handle it with such skill and dexterity.[1] Such trained young men became the guards of some king or lord, and so faithful and obedient were they, that they had no hesitation to die for him when required. They were the greatest and worst enemies of the Portuguese, and did a great deal of mischief to them by sea. Some of them had a naked rapier or cutlass in their right hand and a great target in their left, made of light wood, some again were armed with bows and venomous arrows upon their shoulders; and while moving about, they made a great noise by knocking the hilt of the rapier against the target in order that they might be heard. Others carried long pikes, some pecus with the match readily lighted, and had the best locks that could be found in all Europe. They knew how to use them, and the Portuguese had no advantage over them. Wherever they went, they carried their arms both by day and night.[2]

"They went into battle almost naked, threw javelin with equal address backward and forward, and drew the bow with such skill that their second shaft often split the first. Their extraordinary agility made them the terror of every combat in forest or jungle. On the smallest provocation they prepared themselves for death, and having done so, one would hold his ground against a hundred. Those attached to the person of the prince made it a point of honour not to survive him."[3]

Their military dress and mode of fighting.

"The military dress of the Nayar is a pair of short drawers and his peculiar weapon is an instrument with a thin but very broad blade hooked towards the edge like a bill-hook or gardener's knife, and about the length of a Roman sword. The hooked instrument, the inseparable companion of the Nayar whenever he quits his dwelling on business, pleasure or for war, has no scabbard, and is usually grasped by the right hand as an ornamental appendage during the time of peace and used for destruction in war. When the Nayar employs his 'musquet' or his bow, the weapon already described is fixed in an instant by means of a catch in the waist belt, with the flat part of the blade diagonally across his back; and it can be

1. Johnstone in his relations of the most famous kingdom in the world, 1611.
2. Voyages of Linschoten to the East Indies,
3. Graul Reise nach Ost Indien,

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

175
411 disengaged as quickly whenever he drops his 'musquet' in the wood or slings it across his shoulders for the purpose of rushing to close encounter with this terrible instrument." [1]

704 Cavalry was unknown; there was only infantry. The sol-
714 diers wore a silk cloth wound round the head and carried
411 swords, shields, lances and bows. The king had an umbrella
[293] formed of the leaves of a tree and fixed on to the end of a cane,
[643] for protection from the sun. There was no standard. When they were in battle, and one army was at a distance from the
726 other, two ranges of a cross-bow, the king would ask the Brah-
704 mans to go to the camp of the enemy and tell the knights to let one hundred of his men fight with the same number on his side, when both the parties would go to the central space to do so. The fighting continued even for three days, when blows were given on the head and at the legs. After the death of some men on either side, the survivors were directed to return to their camps. If any more fighting was desired, the same
[465] course was adopted. Sometimes the king rode on an elephant,
[701] and sometimes the Nayars carried him. The pay of a soldier was four carlini a month, and in time of war half a ducat.

701 The Nayars whom the king received in his service were
643 never dismissed, however old they might be. They received their pay and rations, and the king granted favours to whoso-ever had served him well. If, however, they were left unpaid for some years, some four or five hundred of the aggrieved would rise up and go in a body to the palace, and send word to the king that they would go away dismissed, because he did not give them food. The king would then beg them to have patience, pay them at once either the whole amount due to them or a part of it with a promise to pay the balance at an early date. The king generally satisfied them, considering it a disgrace that they should go away to serve under another ruler. Even
[784] in times of war they were not at liberty to touch any peasant, or eat and drink with him in his house without penal-ty. The king was bound to support the mother and family
[752] of any soldier who died in war. He also treated, at his own expense, any soldier who was wounded in battle. [2]

1. Abbe Dubois People of India.
2. A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar, page 130-131, Duarte Barbosa.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Thus did the Nayars as a warlike race play a very important part in the history of *Kerala* during the middle ages. Their weapons and modes of fighting thereafter underwent many changes under the influence of the Portuguese and the Dutch, who introduced western arms and tactics into the then existing art of war, when also the Nayars proved equal to the occasion. Labourdanais, who distinguished himself in the storming of the little town of Mahe, bore the brunt of many a Nayar onslaught, and had therefore opportunities of forming a just estimate of their work. Major Munro, who was instrumental in the storming of that little town in 1761, met the Nayar troops in the field, and thus described their mode of fighting: "One may as well look for the needle in a bottle of hay as any of them in the day-time, they lurking behind the sand-banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the fort, when they appear like bees out in the month of June besides which they point their guns well and fire them also." Dr. Buchanan, who under the orders of Lord Wellesley journeyed through Mysore, Malabar and Canara, spoke of them in the same strain. When Hyder Ali invaded Malabar, they committed terrible havoc on the Mysoreans. "The Nayars are the military class of Malabar," writes Col. Wilkes, who was struck with their pluck and agility. "They are perhaps not exceeded by any nation on earth in their high spirit of independence, but like all persons stimulated by that spirit without the direction of discipline, their efforts are uncertain, capricious and desultory." The last event in which they showed their military valour was in the rebellion of the Pychee Raja of Kurumbranad. With the fall of the Portuguese and the Dutch, and the conquest and annexation of Malabar by the English East India Company, the Nayars have almost lost their warlike characteristics, through successive generations of peace and have now become attached to the land. Even writing in 1855, Captain Drury contrasts the Nayar's effeminate disposition with the martial valour of his forefathers. He does not bear transplantation. He now prefers a quiet swing in the verandah or a lounge under a tree, chewing betel. Unlike his ancestor, he is becoming more and more domesticated. The Nayar population has greatly increased and a large majority of them are not very affluent; and among these physical deterioration is noticeable.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

recently were thatched are now being tiled with tiles of European pattern manufactured either locally or in Mangalore. In these days of comparative peace and security of life and property from marauders and free-booters, the necessity for massive structures has ceased to exist, and, coupled with this, the improved notions of architecture, derived from an easy intercourse with more civilised centres, the rapid progress of education, and with it a better knowledge of, and regard for, sanitation and hygiene, have wrought remarkable changes in the construction of buildings, so that a better class of houses, well built, airy, and commodious, is displacing the old ones with their small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms.

As part of the surroundings of the dwellings in the same compound, there are frequently seen a cattle shed, an excavated tank for bathing purposes, often full of fish and water lilies, a well so arranged as to admit of water being drawn directly from it to the kitchen, an out-house *(matam)* for the Brahman travellers or visitors, and, lastly, a small edifice for the family deity. The gardens surrounding the houses are adorned with mango and jack trees, immense bananas, groves of cocoanut and areca palms and various kinds of flowers. Thus, in most places, their houses, which are occupied by fine types of humanity, (well made men and shapely women), are situated beneath the grateful shade of magnificent avenues of trees.

Four hundred years ago, a Portuguese traveller, writing on the subject, remarks upon the Nayar houses as being scrupulously clean and neat. Without any exaggeration it may be said that they are proverbially so, and the women are either naturally endowed with a taste, or are trained from early childhood, to keep the houses and everything therein neat and clean. Those of the richer and middle classes are in these days furnished with articles of European manufacture, and all their domestic utensils, for daily use, are made either of bell-metal, copper or brass, all well cleaned and washed early every morning.

The furniture of the poorer classes is very simple; a metal pot with a spout, a few metal plates and saucers, a few metal pans of different sizes, a spitoon of brass, a few mats, a knife, a cot or two, a betel box, and a few wooden bins for grains, are nearly all the requirements of a household in this respect.

The house itself is called by several names according to the occupant's caste, that of an ordinary Nayar being a *veedu*

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

death. At ten or twelve years of age of a girl, her mother begged some one of their relations to marry her, and they did so by tying a mariage badge (*tali*). Then the bridegroom would leave her and go away without any consideration of his new relationship. She might also remain with him if he wished it. If she was not inclined to do so, the mother would then go about seeking some one to take her daughter to live with him. If the girl happened to be pretty, three or four Nayars would agree to live with her, and the more lovers she had, the more highly was she esteemed. Each man had his appointed time from midday to the next day at the same hour, during which some signal was placed at the door so that the others might not enter. She was at liberty to dismiss whomsoever she disliked. The advantage of this system was, that a man, who had not the means to support a wife, might have only a share of the cost of the maintenance. Nevertheless, there was a difficulty in ascertaining the fathers of children, who generally lived with the mothers by whom they were brought up. The fathers, in such cases, were named by the mothers. It is said that the kings made this law in order that the Nayars might not abandon their service. According to this system, the fathers were not succeeded by their sons but by nephews (sons of sisters). The above is a summarised account from 'The Travels on the East coast of Africa and Malabar' by Duarte Barbosa, from those of Lodovico Varthema, as also from the voyage of Frankoy Pyrard, page 371.

Origin of the custom of polyandry.

The orthodox view or rather the traditional account according to the *Keralamahatmyam*,[1] is that certain celestial damsels were brought from the world of Indra by Parasurama to satisfy the sexual cravings of the Kerala Brahmans; and that at Vrishabhadri (Trichur), he pronounced his commandment to the *Sdmanthan* and *Sudra* castes to gratify the desires of the said Brahmans, ordering them to put off chastity and the cloth which covered their breasts, and declaring that promiscuous intercourse with three or four men in common was devoid of the least taint of sin. This is certainly a very convenient arrangement for the junior members of the Nambuthiri families to be relieved of their life-long bachelorhood (*Bramhacharyam*) without any

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

643 646

rights. Thus did these *kúttams* (assemblies) exercise a wholesome influence, and act as a powerful check upon the rulers and ministers of the middle ages.[1] They also dealt with wider questions of castes and other matters affecting the welfare of the people. In former times there were also minor councils 623 of *Pramánis* or leaders of the people in every *Desam* exercising similar social functions. A survival of this system even now exists in every village, and their deliberations and decisions upon social matters and caste disputes have great weight. In important matters such as the outcasting of a member of the caste, etc., His Highness the Raja who has always been the [643] social as well as the political head of the State would deliberate [692] upon them with the help of the Brahman *vaidiks*, and his decisions become final. The individual who is placed under a ban [688] is prohibited from entering any temple, bathing in the public tanks, and is, in short, ostracised.

643

Administration of justice.

The Rajas were in former times the fountain of all justice, but were assisted by *Karyakkars* or ministers 692 and Brahmans in administering it. All caste disputes and offences were left to the caste assemblies to deal 623 with, while civil disputes were either left to the arbitration of 681 the caste assemblies or of three or four prominent men. There 564 was no written code, but the punishments assigned by custom [671] fitted the crimes, and they varied with the status of the caste and of the person. The nobles enjoyed the privilege of freedom from confinement. The Brahmans and women were never put to death; the former were punished for grave offences by loss of caste and banishment, and the latter by being sold as slaves. The punishment of death was reserved for such heinous [688] offences as sacrilege, the wilful murder of a Brahman or a cow. The following is a summary of the account given by 175 Duarte Barbosa, pp. 116—117, regarding the methods of dealing 564 with criminals and the nature of the punishments inflicted on 685 them in former times:—When any member of a low caste committed robbery about which a complaint had been made to the king or the governor, orders were issued for his apprehension, and if he was caught and he confessed his guilt, he was generally impaled. His head was severed, and the body being placed on its back, the arms and legs were fastened with ropes to four posts, while the multitude to show their contempt spat upon it. If, however, the malefactor was a Moor, he was beheaded. The

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 76–77.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar

stolen property went to the ruler of the State. If the stolen property was discovered after the escape of the thief, it was returned to the owner after a certain number of days, and a fourth part was appropriated by the State. If, however, a thief refused to confess his guilt, he was confined for a period of eight days during which every method of torture known to the keepers of the prisons was tried to extort his confession. If he continued in reiterating his innocence, it was left to the accuser to elect whether he should be let off or forced to undergo trial by ordeal. In the latter case, on an auspicious day, the accused would be allowed to bathe and recite his daily prayers, after which he was conducted to the idol in the temple. Before the idol he swore that he had not committed the theft nor did he know the guilty person, and plunged his two fingers up to the middle joint into a caldron of boiling oil. If he was burnt, he was accounted guilty of the crime; if unhurt, he was liberated. Another form of proving the guilt or innocence of a prisoner who would not confess his crime, was to make him thrust his hand into a mantle in which a sacred and poisonous snake had been wrapped and force him to lift it out. If he was bitten, he was guilty. A third form was the wading through a tank full of alligators before a pagoda at Palliport, fifteen miles north of Cochin, and if he survived he was considered innocent."[1] Concerning the procedure against the debtors, a curious custom seems to have prevailed, which is thus described by *Varthema*:—

"Let us suppose the case that some one has to pay me twenty-five ducats, and the debtor promises me to pay them many times and does not pay them. I, not being willing to wait any longer, nor to give him any indulgence, shall take a green branch in my hand, shall go softly behind the debtor, and with the said branch shall draw a circle on the ground surrounding him; and if I can enclose him in a circle, shall say to him these words three times: 'I command you by the head of the Brahmans and the king that you do not depart hence, until you have paid me and satisfied me as much as I ought to have from thee,' and he will satisfy me or truly he will die without any other guard, and should he quit the said circle, the king will put him to death."

"It has been already said, that the nobles enjoyed exemption and privileges, and that they could not be taken and put in irons; but if a noble were to rob or kill any one or a cow or to sleep with a woman of low caste or of the Brahmans

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Visscher, pages 68–69.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

or if he ate and drank in the house of a low caste-man or spoke ill of the king, and if any one of these were established in his own words, the king would call three or four honorable gentlemen and have him put to death. After he was dead, they laid him on his back, to place the king's warrant on his breast. If he was left dead in the country, the dead was so exposed as a prey to vultures and dogs. If he was put to death in the city, the dead body was allowed to be removed either as a mark of favour, or on payment of fine, by the citizens with the king's permission. If, on the other hand, he commits any other offence, he would be dealt with in the same way as any criminal already described."

Cruel as the administration of justice might appear to be in ancient times, many early writers bear testimony to the fact that private property was as secure in the fourteenth century as it is to-day, and that security and justice were firmly established in the land. Varthema was impressed with the honesty of the inhabitants; and the favourable testimony of the previous writers was confirmed by Pyrard-De-Laval, a Frenchman, who remarked that justice was well administered and awarded gratuitously. These systems have been completely forgotten and given place to the institution of regular courts, where justice is administered in accordance with the principles of British jurisprudence.

Feudalism in the Cochin State.

From the earliest times, even perhaps before the Aryan immigration, there appears to have been a complete military organisation among the Sudras of Malabar. The country was divided into *Nádu*, or principalities, and the smallest territorial unit in it was a *Désam* (or village) presided over by a *Désavázhi* (ruler of a *Désam*). Each of the *Désams* and *Nádu* was designated by the allotted quota of Nayars it was required to put into the field. The names of these divisions, even after the long lapse of time, have not been forgotten. The authority of the chiefs of these military divisions, large and small, was hereditary in their respective families and they had appropriate titles of distinction. They were not always in attendance on the Raja's person. If not required on particular State duties or religious services, they were called out for offensive or defensive warfare.

A chief was not considered a *Nádavázhi* (ruler of a *Nád*), who had not at least a hundred soldiers attached to him, and one with less than that number was called a Désavázhi.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

and one with less than that number was called a *Désavázhi*. There were in those days no taxes levied from the people, and the chief from the Rajas down to the *Désavázhi* possessed demesne lands for their support which were cultivated either by themselves or leased to *kudiyáns* or tenants; but the following were the chief sources of income, based upon feudal rights and privileges. The rulers levied custom duties upon exports and imports, taxes upon houses of fishermen, tradesmen and professional men. Criminal fines went to fill their coffers, and succession duties were levied upon the estates of deceased persons, especially those who held offices of State or rights over land. Outcast women were made a two-fold source of profit. Lewd adulterous women were made over to the chiefs with a premium for the trouble of looking after them, and the chiefs used in turn to sell the women to foreign merchants as slaves or wives to *Chettis*. The estates of persons who died without heirs were escheated, nor could an heir be adopted without the Raja's consent, for which a fee was generally levied. Protection fees from strangers and merchants were levied under various names and customary presents were the ruler's dues on occasions of feast or funeral. Wrecks were his perquisites, and various animals his monopoly. Concerning the former, Marco Polo wrote about the kingdom of Eli, "And you must know that if any ship enters the estuary and anchors when she has been bound for some other port, they seize her and plunder the cargo. They say that you are bound somewhere else, and it is God that sent you hither to us, so we have a right to all your goods, and think it no sin to act thus. This naughty custom prevails all over the Provinces of India, to wit, that if a ship be driven by a stress of weather into some other port than that to which it is bound, it is sure to be plundered. But if a ship came bound originally to the place, they received it with all honour and gave it protection."[1] The custom of the taking of ships and cargoes lasted down to recent times, until the English factory at Tellicherry entered into agreements with three of the country-powers for the exemption of English vessels from such seizures.

Among the animals that became the property of the Raja were cows with three or five dugs, cattle that has killed a man or other animals, cattle with a white spot near the corner of

1. Yules Marco Polo, page 374.

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

[Marayil Tarwad]

613 173 The story goes back to the early 19th century. Prabaty Amma who came to visit a temple in Ernaklum, met a young Nayar man. Soon after they were fallen in love, and married. The name of this young man was Narayana Panikkar, who was a district officer in Palgat, and later became the *karanavan* of his *tarwad*. By the right of the *karanavan*, he took his wife to his *tarwad*.

613 193 591 968 Thirty years after their marriage, Narayana Panikkar died. According to the law of the Nayar, his wife and children had to leave from his *tarwad* at the moment of his death. Prabaty Amma accompanied with her children left his *tarwad*, but she did not return to her natal *tarwad*, Mullasseri. Instead, she decided to reside in the house which had been built by her husband for her as a gift. She named this *tarwad* Marayil, thus she and her children became independent from Mullasseri *tarwad*. It was said in this time, her mother's *tarwad*, Mullasseri, was so full with her matrilineal kin, hence she preferred to reside in this new house with her sons and daughters. This house is at present occupied by E. group. At the establishment of this new *tarwad*, I think, she must have had some land, or managing rights in farming land, given by her natal *tarwad* or by her husband as a gift, but I failed to discover the economic basis on which this *tarwad* life had been carried on.

613 175 Thus established, the new *tarwad* grew bigger in the course of time. In 1898, the increase of its members led to the first residential partition into two groups, as already stated. It was twenty years after the marriage of the granddaughter of Prabaty Amma, *12* and her daughter *29* who was born in 1888, was ten years old, and *39* is said to have been born in this *tarwad* around this year. From these data, it can be assumed that all members from *1* to *39* of Marayil *tarwad* lived in this *tarwad* building together. The situation of the members of this old *tarwad* before the partition in 1898 is as follows.

613 591 593 182 175 Married members of this *tarwad* mostly practiced "visiting marriage" (see Diagram, the majority of male members were visiting husbands). Seventeen out of twenty-three cases of marriages in the second and the third generations, took a visiting form. Five cases who did not practice "visiging marriage" were younger ones of the third generation, whose ages are almost equal to those of the older members of the fourth generation. In the fourth generation, the cases of the visiting marriages decreased to four out of nineteen cases. These facts reveal that the residential pattern became more neolocal than duolocal during the fourth generation: by this time many had already established independent households in which they lived with their wife and children, having an independent income. These members are shown by ▲ in the Diagram.

A more careful examination of this Diagram, reveals that this tendency had already started in the third generation, as appeared in the case of the husband of *12*, Nando Pillai. He had used to visit his wife for twenty years after his marriage. He was a brilliant and successful man who had an important post in the palace of the Cochin Maharaja, which allowed him to accumulate considerable wealth. He made a new *tarwad* building for his sisters as their *karanavan*, and again in 1898 he built a new beautiful *tarwad* with a big garden, where he himself lived with his wife and children, thus making his wife independent from her *tarwad*. This house is at present occupied by the C group.

613 591 175 182 Then Marayil *tarwad* already suffering from over population, stimulated by this event, split into two groups: one was the *tawari* of eldest daughter of Prabaty Amma, another was that of the second and third daughters. The latter

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

[Marayil Tarwad]

group was named "East Marayil," while the former retained the original name "Marayil." The property was not entirely divided, but managed independently. The group of East Marayil shifted their residence to one mile east of the original one.

After the first partition, in the new Marayil group where I concentrated my study, the *karanavan* was at this time *15*. Among the members of this group, *12* and her sons and daughters had a separate residence built by her husband, Nando Pillai, and supported by him without help from her *tarwad*. It seems to have been already customary in this period among those Nayars who had a considerable individual income, to establish an independent household for their elementary families, as in the case of Nando Pillai. By these men a new type of family came into being alongside the matrilineal joint family.

Nevertheless, it was to take a long time for the establishment of such an elementary family with a neolocal residence pattern among the majority of the Nayars. As the next generation of this case shows, in spite of the paternal activities of Nando Pillai, the family retained its matrilineal pattern. His eldest daughter did not leave the house, and her husband practiced the traditional visiting marriage; the second daughter *29* returned to this house after her husband, who was the *karanavan* of another *tarwad*, died. However, his sons left his house each establishing an independent house where they lived with their wives. As a result, the first and second daughters, with their children, occupied this house, which produced a very similar pattern to a traditional *tarwad*, except for the absence of married out male members.

Through this picture, we can see that the role of the husband/father lies in the establishment of a new segment of a matrilineal group, rather than in the establishing of a nonmatrilineal system. The basic framework of the Nayar system was still matrilineal in this stage. As the result, a *tarwad* or Nayar household was often occupied by some married female members and their children, though the total number of the matrilineal members decreased rapidly by marrying-out members.

The fact that husbands of *26* and *38* did practice visiting marriage might give an impression that they were very old fashioned in their time, but it is really the outcome of the residential situation in the transitional stage: for some of the female members, it was natural to remain in the vacant *tarwad*; and a husband might not have enough economic resources to establish a new house for his wife and children, or might be occupied by the work of his own *tarwad*.

Such a stage also introduced uxorilocal marriage which was new to the Nayar. A husband, instead of building a new house for his wife and children, used the vacant wife's *tarwad* or wife's house built by her father, and he supported his family largely by his own income, as in the cases of *25*, *34* and *53*. Therefore, even in such uxorilocal cases, paternal authority was well developed. When the *tarwad* was in full function, the Nayar never practiced uxorilocal residence, though there were cases of virilocal residence. Uxorilocal residence in this case is irrelevant to the matrilineal system: it came into the picture because of the disintegration of the matrilineal system. It should be treated as a different problem from the uxorilocal residential patterns of other matrilineal systems.

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

[Marayil Tarwad]

613 The increase in the establishment of paternal elementary families gradually
425 split the *tarwad* into pieces, lessening the function of the *tarwad*. This Marayil
175 *tarwad* finally divided its property between individual members in 1944, as did
182 many *tarwad* in this period. This was forty-seven years since the first partition in 1898, and this period saw the disintegration of this *tarwad*.

613 The members of the fourth and fifth generations in the Diagram make up
425 the transitional period: they had the *karanavan* as the head of the *tarwad* and at
175 the same time they played a role of the husband/father as in a patrilineal family.
182 Their duties and obligations were transitional from those of the *karanavan* to
[593] those of the father. Though by law then the *karanavan* was the legal guardian of
[429] the members of a *tarwad*, actually the father who lived with his children was already *de facto* guardian of his children. These individuals were pulled in their obligations and duties between their matrilineal kin and their wives and children. In fact they differentiated their roles according to the economic and residential circumstances in which they were involved, though the degree of differentiation differed from individual to individual.

613 When the fifth generation were in their youth, the *karanavan* of the *tarwad*
593 was *15*. According to the Nayar rule the duty of the fostering and educating
175 these members should be performed by *15*. However, in actuality among these
182 members, those who had been given a higher education by the *karanavan* were sons of *13* and *14* (*31*, *32*, *33*, *36* and *39*), while that of the sons of *12* (*25*, *27*, *28* and *30*) was given by their father. The latter's case is indeed the result of the father's economic ability and his affection towards his children whom he lived with. Yet this father, on the other hand, made also a considerable economic contribution to the members of his own *tarwad* as the *karanavan*. Thus such a man played the two roles of father and *karanavan* at the same time.

613 Such behaviour and contributions created ambivalent psychological
602 inclinations among his descendants through his wife as well as through his sisters.
421 For example, the descendants of *12* who live now partly on property left by
175 *12*'s husband, tend to complain that their grandfather's sisters' daughters who
182 live in the house built by *12*'s husband, are enjoying property left by their grandfather. They said that "they are enjoying our grandfather's property," a situation reasonable from the point of view of the working of the matrilineal system, since "our grandfather" is "their maternal uncle." Here we see an interesting fact that they think in terms of the father (grandfather): "the father (grandfather) is of ours." At the same time, they have a tendency to expect and depend on the economic help from *32* and *27*, who are their matrilineal kin. In fact *57* after the death of her father, was economically helped by *32* and (27), which she took for granted. Among these members at the transitional stage, a confusion of rights and obligations is obvious.

613 In such an unstable situation involving ambivalent elements, what gave
582 them a certain satisfaction or solution was cross-cousin marriage. The marriage
175 of *53*, whose wife is his classificatory cross-cousin brought satisfaction to both
182 matrilineal groups (Marayil and Kallamparanbal), because by this marriage both parties would have a chance to enjoy, and exercise rights on, the property

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

left by *12*'s husband for the kingroups of both his wife and his sisters, since both inclined to demand rights on the property left by him to the other party. The marriage of *56* also involved a similar situation for both members of Marayil and Mangayil in order to enjoy the economic activity of *32*.

Traditionally the Nayar tended to marry among particular *tarwad* (not necessarily two), between which friendly relationships, expressed in terms of *enanger*, had been established. Hence many marriages fall into the category of the cross-cousin marriage. However, the above cited cases were obviously meant to solve the ambivalent economic situation arising from the disintegrating stage of the *tarwad* system; and so it was explained to me. The present younger generation strongly avoid cross-cousin marriage, as they think it is not good biologically. However, whether they dislike it or not, after the disintegration of the *tarwad* system the cross-cousin marriage itself is losing its social and economic function.

Matrilineal Elements in the Present Nayar Family

In spite of the final partition of the *tarwad* property, and the establishment of elementary family households which made the *tarwad* functionless, the ideology of the *tarwad* (matrilineal system) still persists in various aspects of the life of the present Nayar.

In the new system, in theory, the husband established an independent house for himself and his wife, freed from both his *tarwad* and her *tarwad*, but it is interesting to observe that the house built by the husband is found near to his wife's *tarwad*, unless his job forced him to leave their birth place. The picture is that of a set of households whose wives are sisters, grouped in a certain area. For instance the husbands of *55* and *66* built their houses very near to that of the C group, which was built by the father of *29*: these three households are very close to each other, across narrow lanes and a garden. The behaviour of these members was described on page 21.

This might give an impression that women tend to attach to their matrilineal members more than men do. However, men also have very close attachments to their sisters, and are always ready to give moral and economic help to them, in spite of living at a greater distance from them. It was the traditional custom to marry a member of a *tarwad* situated in the same local area, since this was certainly convenient for visiting marriage, and also owing to the inter *tarwad* political relationships. Hence husbands and their sisters easily can visit each other, even after residential separation. Such frequent visits among the members of the matrilineal group maintain great familiarity among them. So far as my own observation goes, a man who has considerable income helps his poorer sisters almost in a same way as he does his wife and children. They themselves say they have often trouble about which they should care for more, wife or sister. They told me, that today they were well aware that they should do their best for their wife and children with whom they live, but they also could not help loving and caring for their sisters and sisters' children very much.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

173 sage of Malabar, gave it to the priestly caste of Brahmins in perpetual holding.

These Brahmins now declared themselves satisfied and moved to take it over, but were at first frightened away by the aboriginal *Naga* (serpent) worshippers. Other Brahmins were then brought in from the north and instructed by Parasu Raman to propitiate the serpents by installing them as their household gods. He also organized the priestly settlers into sixty [611] four villages (*gramams*) and directed them to adopt succession through the mother (*marumakkathayam*), which last injunction they disobeyed, with the single exception of Payyanur in Chirakkal, where Brahmins observe matrilineal descent to this day. He then brought in Sudras (Nayars) from the country east of the Ghats (that is from the Tamil country) and entrusted them with the protection of the Brahmins; they were organized into *taras* and to them were given the duties of supervising, executing and issuing orders, so that rights in Kerala should not be curtailed or suffered to fall into disuse.

173 From this nebulous, mythical past, history later slowly emerges. Already, one thousand years B.C., Solomon is reputed to have traded with ● 175 the south-west coast of India. Commercial contacts with the Near East did actually exist in this part of the sub-continent much earlier than anywhere else in India, the sea acting as a medium of communication. With the discovery of the south-west trade winds by Hippalus in the 1st century A.D., the Romans carried on the profitable relation, and they are reputed to have even had a settlement at Cranganore in Travancore. In 52 A.D., St Thomas landed there, according to local tradition, and converted some Brahmin families to Christianity, thus laying the foundation of the present-day Malabar Christian communities. During the following decades, as a result of the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus in 70 A.D., the first Jews are reputed to have arrived in Kerala to settle at Mattancheri in Cochin.

175 In the 3rd century A.D., the Brahmins called in a king to rule them, and the Perumal dynasty started with Keya Perumal, who came from Keyapuram, east of the Ghats. Trade with other parts of the world continued during this period, the Arabs arriving from the Hadramaut and the Persian Gulf in the 9th century. The Chinese, however, are said by Marco Polo to have been in full control of the Malabar marts when that great traveller visited the area in the 13th century. Shortly afterwards, the last of the Perumals, Cheruman Perumal, was converted to Islam and departed to Mecca never to return.

Before leaving, Cheruman Perumal put his kingdom in order, it is

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

said, by dividing it up between the rajas of Travancore, Cochin, Kolattiri, Kurumbranad, Walluvanad and others. To the Zamorin of Calicut, who was later to become so famous, he left only his sword with the recommendation to "die, kill and annex". The latter potentate and his descendants took the injunction seriously and very quickly in the two following centuries, the 14th and 15th, assumed a leading role on the Kerala stage. They encouraged Arab trade in spices and other commodities, and by their scrupulous honesty and absolute security of commerce, obtained and held it for fully two hundred years.

It was then that the first Europeans arrived on the scene. The Portugese came to beign with, in an attempt to break the Moors' monopoly of Far Eastern products. Coming into conflict with their Mohammedan rivals and with their protégé the Zamorin, they successfully supported the raja of Cochin against these and thus gained a footing on the coast while taking over command of the sea. They were only forced out by the Dutch in the 17th century (although they still hold Goa further north, to this day), and the Dutch in turn were superseded by the British and the French, who settled respectively at Tellicherry and at Mahe, from which fortified places they fought each other for supremacy in the pepper trade for another two centuries.

In the 18th century, the Mohammedan rulers of Mysore descended on Kerala and, after forcibly converting a great number of its inhabitants to Islam, annexed large tracts of it. Tipu Sultan, however, the ally of Napolean, fell foul of the British East India Company, which eventually defeated him at Seringapatnam in 1792. British supremacy in Kerala dates from that year and a system of farming out revenue to the local rajas was instituted. It proved to be a mistaken method of collection, and was the cause of the serious rebellions of Kerala Varma, Raja of the Padinnara Kovilagam of Kottayam, the Pazhassi raja, otherwise known as Pychy raja, in 1797 and from 1800 to 1805. With their termination, the British took over direct administration of Malabar, while leaving Cochin and Travancore to that of their rajas. They were to keep it until 1947 when India was given her independence.

Two years later, the States of Travancore and Cochin were merged to form a United State under the Maharaja of Travancore. In 1953, France finally relinquished her hold on Mahe, and in 1957, the whole coastal region from South Canara to Cape Comorin became the State of *Kerala* which we know today. The name has been variously interpreted as meaning either "land of coconut trees" or "land of the Cheras", an ancient Hindu dynasty of south India.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

ponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.

5. POLYANDRY IN KERALA

During my stay in Kerala, I found that the following castes practise polyandry in the state: Nayars, Thandans, and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of north Cochin, Kammalans such as Tathans (goldsmiths), Karuwans, or Perinkollam (blacksmiths), Asaris (carpenters) and Puri-asaris (laterite-cutters), Musaris (bell-metal smiths of braziers); also the allied castes to these of Kolla-kurups (shampooers, masseurs, and leather-shield makers) and Vil-kurups(bow-makers), Tol-kollans (leather workers), Kanisans (astrologers), Mannans (washermen and barbers), Panans (exorcists and umbrella-makers), Pulluvans (herbalists and *nag* worship songsters). All follow *makkathayam* except the Nayars, who are *marumakkathayam* from one end of Kerala to the other.

Today, Nayars in Kerala are said, as we have seen (p. 92), to have ceased the practice of polyandry. Not only do they say so themselves, but other castes are emphatic on this point as well. Since, with the disappearance of the petty chieftains, Nayar militias no longer exist, the customs that were closely linked to these organizations have also faded away. The Mysore invasions perhaps had something to do with it, too, for Tipu Sultan was grimly determined to eradicate the Nayar armies and made this his principal objective. In 1788, before invading Malabar, in a proclamation which was intended, among other things, to be a warning to the people, he said: ". . . and since it is the practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery; and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts in the fields: I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and to be like the rest of mankind; and if you are disobedient to these commands, I have made repeated vows to honour the whole of you with Islam." (quoted by C. A. Innes, I.C.S. in *Malabar and Anjengo*, Madras District Gazeteers, p. 72). Many of the Moplas today, especially inland, are descendants of Nayars whom Tipu thus did "honour with Islam". They were forcibly circumcized and regaled with beef. Many, however, reconverted themselves later, but lost caste in the process and were never considered the same again.

In spite of it being said that Nayars are no longer polyandrous in Kerala, I was able to find, as I shall show further on, some families left

13: Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

land-owning class. The large admixture of Aryan blood combined with the physical peculiarities of the country would go far to explain the very marked difference between the Nāyar of the present day and what may be considered the corresponding Dravidian races in the rest of the Presidency.*

In connection with the former position of the Nāyars as protectors of the State, it is noted by Mr. Logan† that "in Johnston's 'Relations of the most famous Kingdom in the world' (1611), there occurs the following quaintly written account of this protector guild. 'It is strange to see how ready the Souldiour of this country is at his Weapons: they are all gentile men, and tearmed Naires. At seven Years of Age they are put to School to learn the Use of their Weapons, where, to make them nimble and active, their Sinnewes and Joints are stretched by skilful Fellows, and annointed with the Oyle Sesamus [gingelly: *Sesamum indicum*]: By this annointing they become so light and nimble that they will winde and turn their Bodies as if they had no Bones, casting them forward, backward, high and low, even to the Astonishment of the Beholders. Their continual Delight is in their Weapon, perswading themselves that no Nation goeth beyond them in Skill and Dexterity.' And. Jonathan Duncan, who visited Malabar more than once as one of the Commissioners from Bengal in 1792–93, and afterwards as Governor of Bombay, after quoting the following lines from Mickle's Camoens, Book VII—

'Poliar the labouring lower clans are named:
By the proud Nayrs the noble rank is claimed;
The toils of culture and of art they scorn:
The shining faulchion brandish'd in the right—
Their left arm wields the target in the fight'—

* Gazetteer of the Malabar district. † Manual of the Malabar district.

13;Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

went on to observe: 'These lines, and especially the two last, contain a good description of a Nayr, who walks along, holding up his naked sword with the same kind of unconcern as travellers in other countries carry in their hands a cane or walking staff. I have observed others of them have it fastened to their back, the hilt being stuck in their waist band, and the blade rising up and glittering between their shoulders' (Asiatic Researches, V. 10, 18). M. Mahé de la Bourdonnais, who had some experience of their fighting qualities in the field, thus described them: 'Les Nairs sont de grands hommes basanés, légers, et vigoureux: Ils n'ont pas d'autre profession que celle des armes, et seraient de fort bons soldats, s'ils étiaent disciplinés: mais ils combattent sans ordre, ils prennent la fuite dès qu'on les serre de près avec quelque supèriorité; pourtant, s'ils se voient pressés avec vigueur et qu'ils se croient en danger, ils reviennent à la charge, et ne se rendent jamais' (M. Esquer, Essai sur les Castes dans l'Inde, page 181). Finally, the only British General of any note—Sir Hector Munro—who had ever to face the Nāyars in the field, thus wrote of their modes of fighting:—

'One may as well look for a needle in a Bottle of Hay as any of them in the daytime, they being lurking behind sand banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the Fort, and then they appear like bees out in the month of June.' 'Besides which,' he continued, 'they point their guns well, and fire them well also' (Tellicherry Factory Diary, March, 1761). They were, in short, brave light troops, excellent in skirmishing, but their organization into small bodies with discordant interests unfitted them to repel any serious invasion by an enemy even moderately well organised. Among other strange Malayāli customs, Sheikh

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

Zin-ud-din * noticed the fact that, if a chieftain was slain, his followers attacked and obstinately persevered in ravaging the slayer's country, and killing his people till their vengeance was satisfied. This custom is doubtless that which was described so long ago as in the ninth century A.D. by two Muhammadans, whose work was translated by Renaudot (Lond., 1733). 'There are kings who, upon their accession, observe the following ceremony. A quantity of cooked rice was spread before the king, and some three or four hundred persons came of their own accord, and received each a small quantity of rice from the king's own hands after he himself had eaten some. By eating of this rice they all engage themselves to burn themselves on the day the king dies or is slain, and they punctually fulfil their promise.' Men, who devoted themselves to certain death on great occasions, were termed Amoucos by the Portuguese; and Barbosa, one of the Portuguese writers, alluded to the practice as prevalent among the Nāyars. Purchas has also the following:—'The king of Cochin hath a great number of Gentlemen, which he calleth Amocchi, and some are called Nairi: these two sorts of men esteem not their lives anything, so that it may be for the honour of the king.' The proper Malayālam term for such men was Chāver, literally those who took up, or devoted themselves to death. It was a custom of the Nāyars, which was readily adopted by the Māppillas, who also at times—as at the great Mahāmakkam, twelfth year feast, at Tirunāvāyi †—devoted themselves to death in the

* The author of Tahafat-ul-Mujahidin or hints for persons seeking the way to God, as it is frequently translated, or more literally an offering to warriors who shall fight in defence of religion against infidels. Translated by Rowlandson. London, 1833.

† See Manual of the Malabar district, 164, sq., and Fawcett, Madras Museum Bull., III, 3, 1901.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet a thing of the past, is the latest development of this ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in defending their independence.*

The following description of the Nāyars at the beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no other duty than to carry on war, and they continually carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows, arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried governors, and with one another. They are very smart men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . . These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with whom they live, and until they have been so equipped they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . . In general, when they are seven years of age, they are immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

* E. Hultzsch, South-Indian Inscriptions, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.

13: Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

First they learn to dance and then to tumble, and for that purpose they render supple all their limbs from their childhood, so that they can bend them in any direction. . . . These Nāirs live outside the towns separate from other people on their estates which are fenced in. When they go anywhere, they shout to the peasants, that they may get out of the way where they have to pass; and the peasants do so, and, if they did not do it, the Nairs might kill them without penalty. And, if a peasant were by misfortune to touch a Nair lady, her relations would immediately kill her, and likewise the man that touched her and all his relations. This, they say, is done to avoid all opportunity of mixing the blood with that of the peasants. . . . These are very clean and well-dressed women, and they hold it in great honour to know how to please men. They have a belief amongst them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to paradise."

Writing in the eighteenth century, Hamilton states * that "it was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin) to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is

* New Account of the East Indies, 1744.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

175 178 643 796 proclaimed throughout his dominion at the end of twelve years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain, and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through thirty or forty thousand of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened, and the tent pitched near Ponnany, a sea-port of his about fifteen leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and, after they had killed and wounded many, were themselves killed. One of the desperadoes had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and, when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent, and made a stroke at his Majesty's head, and had certainly dispatched him if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head had not marred the blow, but, before he could make another, he was killed by the guards, and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet."

175 564 683 It is noted by Sonnerat* that the Nāyars "are the warriors; they have also the privilege of enjoying all the women of their caste. Their arms, which they constantly carry, distinguish them from the other tribes. They are besides known by their insolent haughtiness. When they perceive pariahs, they call out to them, even at a great distance, to get out of their way, and, if any one of these unfortunate people approaches too near a Nair, and through inadvertence touches him, the Nair has a right

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

13: Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

to murder him, which is looked upon as a very innocent action, and for which no complaint is ever made. It is true that the pariahs have one day in the year when all the Nairs they can touch become their slaves, but the Nairs take such precautions to keep out of the way at the time, that an accident of that kind seldom happens." It is further recorded by Buchanan * that "the whole of these Nairs formed the militia of Malayala, directed by the Namburis and governed by the Rajahs. Their chief delight is in arms, but they are more inclined to use them for assassination or surprise, than in the open field. Their submission to their superiors was great, but they exacted deference from those under them with a cruelty and arrogance, rarely practised but among Hindus in their state of independence. A Nair was expected to instantly cut down a Tiar or Mucuai, who presumed to defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate awaited a slave, who did not turn out of the road as a Nair passed."

Nāyar is commonly said to be derived from the Sanskrit Nāyaka, a leader, and to be cognate with Naik, and Nayudu or Naidu. In this connection, Mr. L. Moore writes † that "if a reference is made to the Anglo-Indian Glossary (Hobson-Jobson) by Yule and Burnell, it will be found that the term Naik or Nayakan, and the word Nayar are derived from the same Sanskrit original, and there is a considerable amount of evidence to show that the Nayars of Malabar are closely connected by origin with the Nayakans of Vijayanagar.‡ Xavier, writing in 1542 to 1544, makes frequent references to men whom he calls Badages, who are said to have been

* Journey through Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, 1807.

† Malabar Law and Custom, 3rd ed., 1905.

‡ *Vide* R. Sewell. A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar), 1900.

13: Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

Travancore. It is a distinctive suffix to the names of Nāyar sons of Travancore Sovereigns. But, in ancient times, this title was conferred on others also, in recognition of merit. Tambis alone proceed in palanquins, and appear before the Mahārāja without a head-dress. The consorts of Mahārājas are selected from these families. If a lady from outside is to be accepted as consort, she is generally adopted into one of these families. The title Karta, or doer, appears also to have been used as a titular name by some of the rulers of Madura. [At the Madras census, 1901, Kartākkal was returned by Balijas claiming to be descendants of the Nāyak kings of Madura and Tanjore.] The Tekkumkur and Vadakkumkur Rājas in Malabar are said to have first conferred the title Karta on certain influential Nāyar families. In social matters the authority of the Karta was supreme, and it was only on important points that higher authorities were called on to intercede. All the Kartas belong to the Illam sub-division of the Nāyar caste. The title Kuruppu, though assumed by other castes than Nāyars, really denotes an ancient section of the Nāyars, charged with various functions. Some were, for instance, instructors in the use of arms, while others were superintendents of maid-servants in the royal household. Writing concerning the Zamorin of Calicut about 1500 A.D., Barbosa states that "the king has a thousand waiting women, to whom he gives regular pay, and they are always at the court to sweep the palaces and houses of the king, and he does this for the State, because fifty would be enough to sweep." When a Mahārāja of Travancore enters into a matrimonial alliance, it is a Kuruppu who has to call out the full title of the royal consort, Panappillai Amma, after the presentation of silk and cloth has been performed. The title Panikkar is derived from pani, work.

556 553 424 [644] [584] [567] [643] [564] [644] 175 556 644 643 584 553 644

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

796 526 [184] would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the [175] pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power.* We may safely assume that the 3,000 lbs. of pepper, which Alaric demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar." Swinging on the uzhinjal, and dancing to the accompaniment of merry songs, are said to be characteristic amusements of the womankind during Ōnam festival, and, on the Patinaram Makam, or sixteenth day after Thiruvonam. This amusement is indulged in by both sexes. It is noted by Mr. Fawcett that "the cloths given as Ōnam presents are yellow, or some part of them [431] is yellow. There must be at least a yellow stripe or a [194] small patch of yellow in a corner, which suggests a relic [198] of sun-worship in a form more pronounced than that which obtains at present. It is a harvest festival, about the time when the first crop of paddy (rice) is harvested."

796 Concerning another important festival in Malabar, the Thiruvathira, Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar writes as follows.† "Thiruvathira is one of the three great national occasions of Malabar. It generally comes off in the Malayālam month of Dhanu (December or January) on the day called the Thiruvathira day. It is essentially a festival in which females are almost exclu- [176] sively concerned, and lasts for but a single day. The [177] popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration of the death of Kāmadēvan, the Cupid of our national mythology. As recorded in the old Purānas, Kāmadēvan

* See Thurston. Catalogde of Roman, etc., Coins, Madras Government Museum, 2nd ed., 1894.

† Malabar and its Folk, 1900.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

way of preliminary, a high kick in the air, followed by squatting on the haunches, bounding high, turning, twisting, pirouetting, and all the time swinging the sword unceasingly above, below, behind the back, under the arm or legs, in ever so many impossible ways. Nâyar shields are made of wood, covered with leather, usually coloured bright red. Within the boss are some hard seeds, or metal balls loose in a small space, so that there is a jingling sound like that of the small bells on the ankles of the dancer, when the shield is oscillated or shaken in the hand. The swords are those which were used ordinarily for fighting. There are also swords of many patterns for processional and other purposes, more or less ornamented about the handle, and half way up the blade."

"The Nâyars," Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar writes, "have a distinct feudal organisation, and the division of their territories had an unmistakeable reference to it. The territorial unit was the dêsam, presided over by a Dâsavazhi. A number of dêsams adjoining one another constituted a nâdu, which was under the jurisdiction of a chieftain called the Nâduvazhi. Above the Nâduvazhis was the Râjah, the highest suzerain in the country. In course of time, each nâdu split itself up into a certain number of taras, over the affairs of which a Karanavan, or elder, presided. An assembly of these Karanavans constituted the six hundred—an old socio-military organisation of the Nâyars in mediæval times. These six hundred are referred to in two places in the second Syrian Christian document, which bears the date 925 A.D. In a South Travancore inscription, dated 371 M.E., the same organisation is referred to as Venattarunuru, or the six hundred of Venad, and one of their duties evidently related to the supervision of the

631
[175]
[623]

working of temples and charitable institutions connected therewith. As Venad was divided into eighteen districts in ancient days, there might have been altogether eighteen six hundred in the country. The Nāduvazhis possessed considerable authority in all social matters, and possessed enough lands to be cultivated by their Kudiyans. A feudal basis was laid for the whole organisation. Large numbers served as soldiers in times of war, and cultivated their lands when the country was quiet. In modern times, none of them take to military service in Travancore, except those employed as sepoys in the Nāyar Brigade."

[901] Concerning the organisation of the Nāyars, Mr. Logan writes that they were, "until the British occupied the country, the militia of the district (Malabar). This name implies that they were the 'leaders' of the people. Originally they seem to have been organised into six hundreds, and each six hundred seems to have had assigned to it the protection of all the people in a nād or country. The nād was in turn split up into taras, a Dravidian word signifying originally a foundation, the foundation of a house, hence applied collectively to a street, as in Tamil teru, in Telugu teruvu, and in Canarese and Tulu teravu. The tara was the Nāyar territorial unit of organisation for civil purposes, and was governed by representatives of the caste, who were styled Kāranavar or elders. The six hundred was probably composed exclusively of those Karanavar or elders, who were in some parts called Mukhyastans (chief men) or Madhyastans (mediators), or Pramānis (chief men), and there seem to have been four families of them to each tara, so that the nād must have originally consisted of one hundred and fifty taras. This tara organisation of the protector caste played a most important